

LIBRARIANS

NORTH YORKSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL
COUNTY LIBRARIANSalary: £16,392 - £17,418
(national pay award pending)

The County Librarian of North Yorkshire will retire in December, 1982. This offers a unique opportunity for a well-qualified Chartered Librarian who has considerable experience of public library management of senior level to take up a major appointment in one of England's most beautiful counties.

The person appointed will have responsibility to the County Council for all library services supplied to a population of approximately 667,000 spread over an area of more than 2 million acres, through 61 libraries, 21 mobile libraries, 648 schools and multiple other outlets in hospitals, prisons and residential homes.

As well as motivating and controlling the Library Service, the County Librarian will be expected to make a contribution to the corporate management of the County Council.

This challenging and demanding position is based at Northallerton.

Further details and an application form, which must be returned no later than 8th October, 1982, are available from the Chief Executive and Clerk of the County Council, County Hall, Northallerton, North Yorkshire, DL7 8AD.
(Telephone Northallerton 3123, ext. 636).

Librarians
in Government Departments

There are vacancies in the following Government Departments for candidates with professional qualifications and at least one full year's post-qualification experience or one full year's practical work as part of an approved 4-year sandwich course. Those expecting to fulfil these requirements shortly, may normally also be considered.

MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Vacancies in Aldershot, Woolwich and Central London, but successful candidates must be prepared to serve anywhere in the UK.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE, FISHERIES AND FOOD

Branch Library, Tolworth, Surbiton, Surrey.

Part-time post: 22½ hours per week.

DEPARTMENT OF EMPLOYMENT

Employment Appeals Tribunal Library, St James Square, London SW1.

Further vacancies may arise in these and other Departments.

Salary: £5,520 - £7,700; pro rata for part-time post (London up to £1,087 higher).
Starting salary may be above the minimum. Promotion prospects.

For further details and an application form (to be returned by 8 October 1982) write to Civil Service Commission, Alconon Link, Basingstoke, Hants, RG21 1JB, or telephone Basingstoke (0256) 88851 (answering service operates outside office hours). Please quote ref: G3/924.

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Documents signed by Charles I, Charles II and Cromwell.
Autograph letter signed by Mary Johnson, wife of Rev. Richard Johnson, Chaplain of the First Fleet, Port Jackson, 1793.
Corrected galley proof of Sir Winston Churchill's history of the Second World War, etc.

Viewings: Tuesday, 5th October, 9.00 a.m. - 4.30 p.m.
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TLS

THE TIMES LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

FRIDAY • 24 SEPTEMBER 1982 • No 4,147 • 50p

Theodore Dreiser: of sex and streetcars

Clement Attlee, the unknown Prime Minister



January 10, 1947: Clement Attlee and his wife photographed on the occasion of their silver wedding. The antique silver tea caddy in Mrs Attlee's right hand is a present from the staff at 10 Downing Street. The Prime Minister and his wife, The Times reported, had found it on the dining room table when they came down to breakfast.

Michael Tanner on Donizetti's operas

C. M. Woodhouse: the disarmament debate

Patricia Highsmith on rats

M. F. Perutz: the genetics of evolution

Agatha Christie's life

C. S. Lewis's essays

Obsolescent laws

Tamil myths

Commentary: Mike Leigh; P. N. Furbank on Pirandello

Fiction: Fay Weldon, J. G. Ballard

Royal County of BERKSHIRE

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N.E. Berks, Central Library, High Street, Slough SL1 1EA. Tel:
Slough 35180. Closing date October 1, 1982.

Berkshire County Council is an equal opportunity employer and all
applications will be considered solely on the basis of suitability for the post
irrespective of race, colour, sex, marital status or disability.

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NEW BOOKS

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The last day for receipt of applications and all references is 28 January, 1983. Application forms and fuller information may be obtained from the Director of the Institute, 17 Buccleuch Place, Edinburgh EH1 9JN. Telephone 01-637 1011 extension 8348.

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LITERATURE

TLS SEPTEMBER 24 1982: 1023

Of sex and streetcars

Pearl K. Bell

THOMAS P. RIGGIO (Editor)

 Theodore Dreiser: American Diaries
 1902-1926
 471pp. University of Pennsylvania
 Press. £21.40.
 08122 78097

Theodore Dreiser began keeping a diary in the autumn of 1902, when he was thirty-one years old and had sunk to one of the lowest points in a long and tumultuous life. His first book, the novel *Sister Carrie*, had been brought out two years earlier by a reluctant publisher who had insisted on Pecksniffian alterations in the hope of making the harsh saga acceptable to the genteel taste of the time. Yet it had received mainly bad reviews, and sold scarcely at all. Dreiser's royalties, for the first year of *Sister Carrie*'s life in the world, came to \$68.40. After months of restless wandering through the South and Midwest, struggling with anguished futility to get on with his second novel, *Jennie Gerhardt*, Dreiser came to uneasy rest in Philadelphia, in a state of nervous and physical collapse. The doctor he consulted prescribed some medicines and thought it might help if his patient kept a diary: how he slept, what he ate, the pills and tonics he took and how he responded to them, what he was reading, where he walked. For the time, it was an extraordinary kind of therapy.

Given Dreiser's instinctive reverence for the power of facts, for the meticulously observed minutiae of daily existence which he wove into his novels, it is not surprising that he attached the doctor's prescriptions to his diary, and invariably recorded the cost of filling them. Very rarely, however, did he allow himself to go beyond the scrupulous recording of symptoms, pills, food, and the like, to rail against his lonely and poverty-stricken state, as he did one grim winter day when he had to walk five miles for lack of a car fare: "Profess as I may and draw myself up to the full stature of my courage, there is nothing but sorrow for me in thinking of what I might have. The beauty, the comfort, the affection of the world... Me. Theodore Dreiser. A man who has ideas enough to write and to spare and walking for want of a nickel." Soon after this entry in 1903, he broke off the diary he had kept for less than a year, and fled to Brooklyn. He would return

to the task of a daily record only sporadically in the next two decades.

In 1917, with four more novels now behind him, Dreiser settled in the literary mecca of Greenwich Village and once again took up the ritual of day-to-day notes. Though he was by now in nothing like such desperate straits, and could take comfort in his growing reputation, Dreiser was still far from confident of his ability to live by his writing, as the obsessive attention to money in the diary makes clear. But the Village world did not hold him long – he was always too much of a loner – and by 1919 he had moved to Hollywood with Helen Richardson, the would-be film actress who eventually became his second wife. The California diary, covering the period from 1919 to 1926, is the longest and potentially the most interesting of those in the present volume, for it was then that he wrote the novel, *An American Tragedy*, whose enormous success drastically changed his life.

What is immediately startling about Dreiser's intermittent record of his daily doings is its unliturgical bareness; the band of the writer is scarcely detectable in these telegraphic jottings, and it is clear throughout that at no point did Dreiser conceive this record as a literary journal which might eventually take its place among his published works. It would be hard to think of another novelist of genius who in his daily summing-up remained so stubbornly indifferent to literary reflection or analysis, to philosophical meditation, gossip, self-scrutiny, to capturing the easily forgotten transient ideas for novels or stories that occur to a writer at unexpected moments. Dreiser's notes about the work in hand are limited entirely to subject and title, acceptance or rejection, and how much he was paid. He is far more forthcoming about the weather, and where he took his meals and especially how much they cost, and he is particularly informative about the staggering succession of women who shared his bed (and sometimes the floor) morning, noon and night. Given the far from permissive sexual mores of the time, it may at first seem curious that he was able to put his hands on so many compliant, uninhibited females, but they were in the main women who lived on the fringes of bohemia or longed to become part of that emancipated world.

If we are given no idea of the trouble he might be having with a particular literary project, we none the less get a vivid sense of the way Dreiser exploited the editorial talents of his lovers, most of them far better educated than he, so ruthlessly as he did their sexual ardour. An autodidact whose grammar was shaky and whose spelling remained capricious throughout his life, Dreiser made no secret of his dependence on all the talents of his innumerable women. As the editor of these diaries, Thomas Riggio, dryly remarks in his introduction, "To every bedroom he carried along a manuscript as well as a change of clothes." The journalist Hutchins Hapgood, with whom Dreiser had a rather edgy friendship during his Greenwich Village days, claimed in his memoirs that "Everything was subordinated in Dreiser's life to his work... He rarely talked about anything except literature... The only other absorbing interest he had was sex; and that took up a second place... Neither in his talks to me nor in his early autobiographical works did I ever discover any hint of the higher and more intense sex-innigation."

From his diaries one would find it impossible to infer what Dreiser actually had to say about literature; and there is a glaring lack of any sort of imagination, higher or lower, in Dreiser's clipped, unadorned record of his restless sexual "verletism", as he called it. Though Mr Riggio claims that the Village diary "underscores the links between Dreiser's work and his sexual encounters, and therefore is important for an understanding of his entire career", this would seem to be taking the scholar's wish for the writer's deed. Dreiser the writer is nowhere to be seen or felt in a typical entry, for June 6, 1917:

Bert and I eat at French place. ("Bert" was his nickname for Estelle Kubitz, his secretary and principal mistress that year). She is in good humour... I buy her a penny Dictionary of sex terms arrives. Louise calls up. Is going to New Rochelle today to play tennis. Will come down tomorrow. I post these notes. Lill calls up. Wants to come down. Does so in half hour. Is very gay... I let her look at new dictionary of venery which just came. She gets excited. Wants to copulate. We do, in back room. Lill

leaves. I go to bank. 2:45. Return. Get bottle of milk and box of Sanatogen. Make myself drink... I go out, get a steak (2 lbs., 70¢). 2 boxes strawberries (25¢). one bottle milk (quart, 11¢)... We eat, read papers, talk of war.

He does not tell us what they said about the war – there is almost nothing in the diaries about the world outside Dreiser's daily rounds, "round" being one of his favorite euphemisms for sexual intercourse – though we know from other sources that Dreiser was fiercely pro-German and anti-English. What we are informed about, at repetitious length, is which streetcars he took, where he got off, when the clear-headed woman arrived, what, as fortune-teller read in his tea leaves, how the price of toilet paper has risen. Though Dreiser knew many of the writers, journalists, and radicals who made New York an exciting place to be in those years, he almost never remarks anything more revealing than their names. At one point we are told that Abraham Cahn, the editor of the *Jewish Daily Forward*, came to see Dreiser, who did not love the Jews, but all the novelist has to say about the visit is "We discuss Russia, the Bolsheviks, Dostoevsky, and the East Side."

If Dreiser had no interest in using his diary as a notebook of ideas and possibilities, literary and otherwise, what purpose did this severely factual accumulation of daily trivia fulfil? One is tempted to regard the sexual details as a sign of delayed adolescence, a ge-whizz middle-aged way of assuring himself about his undiminished prowess as a lover. But that doesn't account for everything in the diaries, and the answer is more likely to be found in Dreiser's incurably superstitious nature. Especially in the down-and-out years in Philadelphia, Dreiser took very note of horseshoes, hunchbacks, cripples, and other omens of good or bad luck. Believing as he did in a fearless mechanistic universe, the act of recording all the bits and pieces of his daily doings may have served Dreiser, however unconsciously, as a way of propitiating a malevolent fate. To write something down is to bring it, in some way, under control. When he noted the imminent break-up of his affair with Estelle Kubitz, Dreiser for once allowed himself a looser rein: "What can you do in this world, which is so unbalanced, all running after the few successful, still ignoring the

hopelessly poor or unsuccessful or defective. Life is made for the strong. There is no mercy in it for the weak – none." But such ruminations are all too rare.

One has to remember that it was a long time before Theodore Dreiser was finally granted the financial success he craved – and deserved. Through all the years in which he devoted spare moments to "posting" the notes in his diary, he was plagued by money worries. (When he held a phenomenally well-paid job as editor of a women's magazine, in the first decade of the century, he kept no diary.) As late as 1922, when Dreiser was fifty-one, his recurrent attacks of despondency would occasionally allow the writer to push aside the accountant of sex and streetcars, and confess in the diary that "At the moment I see no very clear way out of money troubles or that I am making any real artistic headway with work. The relentless push against the individual on and away into dissolution hangs heavy on me." It was only with the publication of *An American Tragedy*, in 1925, that Dreiser, after half a century of nightmares about poverty and failure, finally became rich as well as famous. There was no longer any need to disarm a hostile universe with his ritualistic jottings, and that was the end of Dreiser the diarist.

There was always a strong element of the primitive in Dreiser, as man and writer. He was, as F. O. Matthiessen pointed out in his critical study, the first American writer whose family name was not English or Scotch-Irish. The American child of an impoverished German immigrant father, he knew nothing of genteel literary manners and remained isolated from the prevailing tradition. As an ill-educated outsider, he did not have to pay his dues to a world that automatically excluded him, and this as much as his driving ambition gave him the raw strength to trust his own feelings and use his undisciplined gift of observation. It hardly needs saying by now that this rendered him inimical to the snug middle-class values that bad American culture by the throat when he began to write *Sister Carrie*. As his friend, the scientist Elmer Gates, wrote to Dreiser early in his career, "You have the genius to describe what makes place, and not merely what you think ought to take place." But of course he knew this perfectly well. One cannot help wondering why,

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

The reticent Prime Minister

Kenneth O. Morgan

KENNETH HARRIS

Attlee
630pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
£14.95.
0 297 77993 1

Clement Attlee is our Unknown Prime Minister. Compared with him, Bannan Law (to whom the term was originally attached) is a model of transparency. Attlee's enigmatic, reticent style was celebrated, perhaps notorious, during his lifetime. His autobiography, *As It Happened*, is so unrelenting as to be almost comic. "Quite an exciting day," was his considered verdict on July 27, 1945, the day he went to the Palace to become prime minister. His volume of reminiscences *A Prime Minister Remembers*, has been described by A. J. P. Taylor as being no more than a showing of what a prime minister forgoes. None of the memoirs of the period of Attlee's heyday, from the diaries of Dalton to those of Cresswell, have shed any particularly revealing light on Attlee's personality ideas, hopes, fears, tensions or uncertainties. Television interviews in his last years proved equally unsuccessful. Appropriately enough his private papers in Oxford and in Cambridge are sparse and uncommunicative. They tell us little of the mighty events that punctuated his premiership. Years which saw the winning of world war, the building of the welfare state, independence of India, the founding of Nato, the secret development of Britain's nuclear weapons programme, are as dust in a career which embodied the useful, if limited, talents of the public-school headmaster and the country solicitor, transmuted into a kind of genius.

It is, therefore, a supremely difficult task that Kenneth Harris has set himself over the years in trying to write a full authorized biography of this impenetrable but formidable statesman who, almost by stealth, managed to transform the course of British and international history over six momentous years. Mr Harris deserves warm congratulations on a notable achievement. His book, perhaps, has its limitations. Much the worst of them is, presumably, the fault of his publishers, not of the author, namely the failure to have any citation of sources in footnotes, or a proper bibliography. These defects are a grave disservice to author and reader alike, and detract from the value of an important and highly informative book.

Other apparent shortcomings can all be justified. For instance, the sources used, despite Harris's devoted labours, are in some respects incomplete. He has made excellent use of the Cabinet papers in the Public Record Office, but apparently none of the prime minister's files, which are more revealing of Attlee's outlook on major issues such as Palestine, India, or economic policy. The Foreign Office files could not have been used to advantage since, on Harris's own showing, Attlee was a decisive figure in the conduct of foreign affairs throughout the period from 1945 to 1951. On the other hand, a biographer can hardly be blamed for not plunging further into the vast Charybdis of the public records from 1939 which have swallowed up without trace many a dry-as-dust pedant before now. Other new material that the author brings to bear, notably private papers from Attlee's family and his interviews with over a score of politicians, civil servants, aides, personal acquaintances and others, more than redress the balance.

Again, the book is certainly austere in style, peculiarly appropriate for one as self-contained and portland as Attlee. There is barely a joke in its 300,000-plus words, unless the extracts of doggerel verse penned by Attlee on topics ranging from Gallipoli to Harold Macmillan are intended to be humorous. However, the artist is restricted by his material. Introducing sparkle into a treatment of Attlee's career is an impossible task. Nor can drama be injected into Attlee's private or family life where none apparently existed apart from Mrs Attlee's driving methods. The style of the book is

impeccably lucid; the conclusion is interesting and even moving. The standard of factual accuracy is very high. The only error worth mentioning is one by the printers who turn Lord Ammon, chairman of the Dock Labour Board and Labour whip in the Lords, into "Lord Annan", surely not a Freudian blunder.

Another problem is that concentrating on Attlee's leadership of the party and the government tends to downgrade his close colleagues, sometimes with unfair results. Herbert Morrison usually appears here as a self-seeking intriguer - "couldn't stand the fellow" - the manager of a supremely efficient legislative and parliamentary team for six years seldom surfaces. Aneurin Bevan is another constant difficulty for the prime minister, unstable, always liable to "emotional spasms" at awkward moments. His building up of the National Health Service is not discussed. No wonder, with two such colleagues, that Attlee east his vote for Gaiskell in 1953. Again, Arthur Creech-Jones was simply "one of my mistakes" to Attlee, not the architect of a new and enlightened colonial development policy. Presumably ground-nuts buried everything else. But these defects are in the nature of biography, which inevitably foreshortens and distorts to some degree. A biography of Attlee cannot provide an analysis of the Labour movement under his leadership, nor can it provide a study of the structure or typology of a party which could throw up such a man to lead at such a time. Biography has its real merits, too. In this case, it powerfully illuminates the dark, hidden centre of a major government, hitherto quite impenetrable.

Harris, then, has written a considerable book. It provides valuable material on aspects of wartime politics, on the nature of Cabinet government after 1945, on the transfer of power in India, on the 1950-51 Labour administration, and many other matters. Scholars and enthusiasts will for ever be in the author's debt. With other major works forthcoming, such as Alan Bullock's final volume on Bevin, Ben Pimlott's edition of Dalton's diaries, and Philip Williams's of Gaiskell's, we shall be better able to "propel" the 1945-51 Labour government out of the mists of prehistory into the more demanding world of historical reality.

As for Attlee's early career, the main features are already well established. We learn again of the remarkable impact, on a conventional middle-class product of Hallowbury and Oxford, of social work in the Edwardian East End. On the other hand, while a forceful member of the ILP, unlike many in that party Attlee had few qualms about taking the "patriotic" view of the First World War. From minor of Steppen, he rose without trace into parliament and junior office in the first two Labour governments. He was lucky not to be in MacDonald's cabinet in August 1931, and to have to commit himself on cuts in unemployment benefit. He was lucky to keep his seat in the 1931 election when almost all his experienced colleagues lost theirs. He was supremely lucky to succeed Lansbury as leader in 1935, aided by having served as acting leader in the recent past. But he rode his luck. He rose steadily in stature during the years of Spain and Munich. He easily survived attempts by Laski, Ellen Wilkinson and others to dislodge him. By May, 1940, his authority was unchallengeable. It was reinforced during the war years when, as Harris clearly demonstrates, he was far more than an anonymous chairman of committees. He was an active policymaker in international affairs, and an effective critic of Churchill's methods of conducting the premiership. He had himself evolved a powerful analysis of the techniques of Cabinet government. Few men were better equipped for the highest office than was Attlee in July 1945.

The years of the premiership from 1945 to 1951 are, quite rightly, the core of Harris's book. His account will form an enduring contribution to political history. He shows, and the prime ministers' files in the PRO confirm the

point - that Attlee was much more than merely a grey, senescent director of a myriad of interlocking Cabinet committees. He was a strong, clear-minded leader who, especially in the 1945-47 period, often intervened in Cabinet to devastating effect. He took an ebullient colleagues, even Bevin on occasion, and unhesitatingly cut them down to size. He showed marked gifts in handling potentially explosive party conferences, or meetings of the parliamentary party. In one crucial area, Attlee's role was utterly decisive. On India, he had a special expertise, following his membership of the abortive Simon commission in 1927-30. At every stage of Cabinet deliberation, Attlee's influence was crucial in the timing and direction of British policy, from the vital parallel decision to speed up independence for Burma in 1947 to the extreme rapidity of the evacuation of British forces in the summer of 1947. Mountbatten's aide could write of Attlee, during these with a hidden fire. Harris staunchly defends Attlee's conduct of Indian policy; this reviewer can only record his total agreement. In foreign policy, too, Attlee's role was a powerful one, especially in 1950-51 over such weighty matters as the Korean war, German rearmament and the Persian oil crisis. With Bevin ailing and Morrison seemingly out of his depth at the Foreign Office, Attlee alone gave a firmness and consistency to British policy then in a number of different theatres. Even in the controversial case of Palestine, Attlee's policy was sane and balanced.

More could, perhaps, be said about the other side of Attlee's qualities. He could handle difficult individuals with

extreme dexterity - Cripps in 1947, Bevin until the spring of 1951. But he could not assume control over complex events were throwing the government quite off course. In the financial and political crises of 1947, Attlee failed to offer any real lead. His passivity in his hospital bed in April 1951 made the crisis of Bevan's challenge to Gaiskell's budget very much worse. On economic matters, he had seldom any great flights of originality. He had diminishing interest in nationalization, marginal concern with aspects of social reform; he showed the negative features that "consolidation" implied. In the last phase of Labour party leadership from 1951 to 1955, Attlee genuinely believed that his continued presence at the top would help moderate the feud between Gaiskell and Bevan, and help resolve policy differences on Germany and the bomb. Without doubt, this interlude made things worse, and the feud between the Gaiskells and the Bevinists much more unbridgeable. Inadvertently, Labour in the 1950s was removed as a credible party of government.

A complete life of Clement Attlee leads, inevitably, to wider reflection on his public style. He was not an intellectual, certainly not a man with a zest for the interchange of new ideas. Bevin called him "our Campbell-Bannerman", which is not altogether a compliment. It is somehow appropriate that, when Harris asked Attlee of which other country he would have liked to be a citizen, the woering answer that came was Denmark. But he was a strong, self-sustained man. The *New Statesman's* portrait of him as the Fifities was headed "The Enigma". This book does not confirm the old view of Attlee's modesty. On the

contrary, he was an arrogant little man with much to be arrogant about. He had a firm view of the limitations of nearly all his colleagues - Cripps, Gaiskell, Dalton, Bevan, Shawcross, Gaiskell included. Only King George VI, Bevin and his septuagenarian colleague, Lord Addison, kindled his genuine enthusiasm. Throughout, Attlee's slow-burning tactfulness and qualities were used to advantage. He illustrated perfectly the old Roman tag that if you remain silent you are considered a philosopher. Yet here was a man whose talents were unique and indispensable, a man of profound moral courage. He embodied, in his own Strube-like person, Gaiskell's definition of the statesman (applied to Peel), "the powers of a first-rate man and the creed of a second-rate man".

Like all the great political leaders, like Peel or Asquith, Attlee was buoyed up by a sense of his own indispensability. The party was created in his own image. Nor did his ILP heritage desert him. From the nationalization of hospitals to the recognition of Communist China, his instincts took him often into the radical camp. There is something that Attlee Younger's later judgment that Attlee was "the outside left member of his Cabinet". His talents enabled him to hold together an extraordinary team of gifted prima donnas, to weld his party into a rare mood of united purpose, to transform his country into a welfare democracy, and the empire into a multicultural commonwealth. He imposed his elusive personality on an entire generation. We are essentially products of the Age of Attlee. The monuments of that intense, indomitable, noble little man still, modestly veiled no doubt, all around us.

The reluctant President

J. A. Thompson

JUDITH LICKER ANDERSON
William Howard Taft: An Intimate History
277pp. Norton. £12.50.
0 393 01462 2

Recently it has been said that the only indispensable qualifications for becoming President of the United States are a driving desire to do so and the lack of other employment, so that one can devote the years of organization and campaigning necessary to win a nomination. Thus it now seems anomalous in the extreme that seventy years ago the office was held by a man who not only made hardly any effort to attain it but openly professed his lack of both the desire and the capacity to discharge its duties. "It is my story," William Howard Taft declared gleefully when it snowed on his inauguration, "I always said it would be a cold day when I got to be president of the United States."

The position Taft really aspired to was the one he achieved nine years after his overwhelming rejection by the electorate in 1912 - Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. As President, he had had the galling experience of appointing another man to "the one place in the government which I would have liked to fill myself". However, ten years earlier, while Governor-General of the Philippines, Taft had declined two invitations to be nominated to the Supreme Court; despite his frequently proclaimed distaste for politics, he went on to become Secretary of War and then President. It is this "paradox" and "puzzle" that provides the focus of Judith Anderson's book. In addressing it, Professor Anderson, a pupil of the late Fawn Brodie, has concentrated on Taft's psychological development and has not attempted to supersede Henry Pringle's comprehensive biography published in 1939, and her account of Taft's public career, which is quite brief, though not novel, is simply the background to the story.

Anderson's approach at least has the virtue of giving serious attention to Taft's most striking characteristic - his

size. Always a heavy man, as President he weighed over twenty-five stone. A special bathtub had to be installed in the White House, and an extra wide door in his Ford sedan. Taft's dimensions inspired jokes, including some by himself, at the time, but the author is the first to use "the rapidly expanding medical literature on the subject of obesity" in order to seek insights into Taft's particular psychological "make-up". She points out that Taft put on a lot of weight as President (as Secretary of War and later Chief Justice he was a mere eighteen stone), and takes this as a sign of stress and unhappiness. Admitting that his obesity may have arisen from glandular condition, she is persuaded that "it was clearly aggravated by feelings of inadequacy in the face of the pressures and influences of his ambitious and demanding parents".

Taft's emotional insecurity persisted beyond his youth, according to Anderson, and he continued to need the reassurance he acquired through others' approval of his achievements. He sought to replicate in his marriage his relationship with his parents, and consequently his wife, Nellie, had great influence over him. It was she who steered him away from a judicial career in Ohio towards Washington and the White House. Anderson suggests that Nellie, an unusually capable and ambitious woman who had been frustrated and unhappy as a Victorian young lady, saw Taft as an instrument through which she could fulfil her own aspirations. She was later to reveal in her quasi-regal role in the Philippines and her status as First Lady, although soon after entering the White House she suffered a stroke which incapacitated her for most of a year. Partly for this reason, as Anderson sees, Taft as President depended on others and for the rest of his career, including his happy and successful Chief Justiceship, he was at last his own man.

Professor Anderson documents this story with quotations from family letters and Nellie's reminiscences and in its broad outlines, it is quite enough, though perhaps not quite as original as she claims. (The obituary of Nellie Taft "to have been" fairly candid about her role in pushing Taft

into politics.) But at times the case is weighed over twenty-five stone. A special bathtub had to be installed in the White House, and an extra wide door in his Ford sedan. Taft's dimensions inspired jokes, including some by himself, at the time, but the author is the first to use "the rapidly expanding medical literature on the subject of obesity" in order to seek insights into Taft's particular psychological "make-up". She points out that Taft put on a lot of weight as President (as Secretary of War and later Chief Justice he was a mere eighteen stone), and takes this as a sign of stress and unhappiness. Admitting that his obesity may have arisen from glandular condition, she is persuaded that "it was clearly aggravated by feelings of inadequacy in the face of the pressures and influences of his ambitious and demanding parents".

The premise of this book is that Taft as President was a failure because he was peculiarly unfitted for office that he proved himself to be. Taft was undeniably inept, but one should not underestimate the objective difficulties of his position. When he assumed office, the progressive insurgency had already created divisions in the Republican party that may well have been unbridgeable. The tariff issue that caused Taft so much trouble had been ducked by his predecessor, Theodore Roosevelt. Certainly, Taft's defeat in the 1910 congressional elections can not simply be attributed to the President's blunders. But, above all, it is hard to see how Taft could have survived the return from the African jungle of Theodore Roosevelt, the man who, as Professor Anderson emphasizes, more or less single-handedly rode a bull President. At fifty-one, "the Colonel" was in no mood to retire, or to play second fiddle to his former lieutenant. He launched a radical crusade that alarmed his more conservative friends and, in Henry Cabot Lodge's words, "turned Taft from a man into a principle". When in 1912 Roosevelt stood at Armageddon and "battled for the Lord" as the presidential candidate of the Progressive Party, it was he who, according to the passionate "countrymen" while Taft faded into the background.

Of carriers and kings

Patricia Highsmith

MARTIN HART

Rats
Translated by Arnold Pomerans
172pp. Allison and Busby. £8.95
0 85031 297 3

Most people think of rats as abhorrent creatures, carriers of dread and pestilence. Squirrels are not rats with bushy tails, says Martin Hart, a Dutch ecologist (a term meaning an observer of animal behaviour). Then why is it more pleasant to let a squirrel take a peanut from one's hand than to feed a rat a piece of cheese in the same manner? Squirrels move in a charming way. Rats prowl furiously over garbage, or emerge wet and filthy from sewer outlets. The average person's antipathy to rats will not be much dispelled by this book, even though the author says that a rat can be kept as a friendly leucisus or apt pet, and that only cornered rats are apt to attack or bite. Yet the fair minded Hart relates on page two a favourite story of his father's: his father's gardener successfully cornered and killed a rat in his chicken coop, and "with a chuckle" showed her husband two small wounds on her wrist. The wounds became weals, and before midnight of the same day she was dead.

Hart's nine chapters tell the rat's history, describe its forebears and relations, its behaviour in freedom and in cages, its reproduction; and the last chapter compares men and rats. Rat nightmares may be made worse by learning that a rat population, when under one another, so that the extremities of their tails inevitably cross, resulting finally in a knot which they cannot undo, the kind of knot that becomes harder the more they pull in various directions. Hart has remarked callousness on some tails, showing that the rats struggled for some time. One anecdote is of a farmer who saw a rat in a hole in his floorboard, poured boiling water down, then was unable to pull the dead rat out. He had to enlarge the aperture, and then he discovered the rat was attached to several others in a rat king.

The book's fifty black-and-white

photographs show rats at play, nursing, fighting, mating, going through the rituals of "I am the conqueror" and "I accept defeat", in which picture the defeated is literally pressed down by both forepaws of the conqueror, though otherwise not injured. Three photographs and one X-ray photograph are of rat kings, which seem especially to intrigue the author. A rat king is not chief of the clan, but a name given by German observers (*Rattenkönig*) to a number of rats whose tails have become inextricably entangled. This might have caused shock and superstitious speculations among the people of the Middle Ages. How could such a thing have come about? The X-ray photograph of the king of Rutenphen (1963 discovery) shows seven rats' tails, the last thirds of which are snarled like a tangle of knitting wool in the centre of the picture, while each of the seven tails leads to the limp hind quarters of a rat. Many kings are composed of dead rats, because none can move in any direction to find food and, as the author remarks, it is unlikely that their fellow rats are going to toss them anything to eat. Other kings are discovered alive, when their squeals betray their positions.

What causes rat kings? Many are the wild ideas, and Hart sets them all forth. Could a human being have died them? Have the rats brought something sticky into their nests, and in their movements caused their tails to be stuck together? But the tails are not stuck, they are tangled and knotted. The most likely explanation would seem to be that several rats in a confined space, perhaps started by noise, or an enemy, or over and under one another, so that the extremities of their tails inevitably cross, resulting finally in a knot which they cannot undo, the kind of knot that becomes harder the more they pull in various directions. Hart has remarked callousness on some tails, showing that the rats struggled for some time. One anecdote is of a farmer who saw a rat in a hole in his floorboard, poured boiling water down, then was unable to pull the dead rat out. He had to enlarge the aperture, and then he discovered the rat was attached to several others in a rat king.

A rat king was noted as early as 1612 in Denzle, consisting of nine adults. "The Emblem of Johannes Sambucus", 1564, reproduced in a full-page woodcut illustration, shows a rat king of seven in their tied centre, while a man raises a stick to hit them, and another figure strolls away into a medieval landscape of houses, an

screed bridge, and flowers.

It is usual for rat kings to be put on display for some time after discovery. The two kings of Dollstadt (1835) were exhibited in various places; that consisting of twenty-eight rats could be seen in an inn and that with fourteen rats was on show in the woodman's shed in which it had been found. Occasionally newly discovered kings have been paraded through towns or villages so that everyone could have a good look at them. The rat king of Leipzig was kept - from 1722 onwards - in a mummified form in the private museum of Dr Petermann. I often imagine the man whom I admire more than anyone else, with the possible exception of Mozart, Johann Sebastian Bach - who lived in Leipzig from 5 May 1725 - going to visit Dr Petermann's museum. Unfortunately he composed no music for the occasion. Rats portrayed in music are very rare indeed, and since there is not enough material for a chapter on the subject I shall say a few words about it here. The most important rat in music is found in Prokofiev's beautiful opera *The Love of Three Oranges*. The particular rat is an ugly transformation of the Princess Ninetta. Both Schubert and Wolf have put Goethe's poem *Der Rattenfänger* ("The Rat-Catcher") to music.

This paragraph typifies Hart's pleasantly rambling and personal style. He is also a novelist and short-story writer. In his chapter on the behaviour of rats, however, he sharpens up and delivers a knock or two to Konrad Lorenz and B. F. Skinner. Hart is not inclined to anthropomorphize, and has no respect for scientists who leave tape-recorders on all night in the laboratory and expect to gather correct data from sound alone: of fighting, for instance. Rats do not always squeal when they fight.

Among the diseases that rats can transmit are bubonic plague (via their fleas), Weil's disease (caused by a bacillus living in water, making fishermen, swimmers and even firemen liable to this fatal ailment if the water is impure), trichinosis, paratyphus, ratbite fever, foot-and-mouth disease and rabies - and this list is not complete. "Not the Rat Man is to blame," reads a section heading. Man keeps creating the edifices, offices, warehouses, sewers, poultry farms, pigsties and abattoirs that provide ideal dwellings for rat families. Hart also points out that man has eradicated the rats' natural enemies



The raisbane seller; a drawing by Giovanni reproduced from the book reviewed here.

(cats) owls? the peregrine falcon? This reviewer would have liked more on the subject, and adds that whoever despoils nature has to pay a price.

Are rats men in miniature? Whoever reads Skinner's extremely lucid expositions discovers that the writer does indeed consider human beings as complicated as rats. We have at any rate one thing (which Skinner does not mention) in common with rats: we exist in very large numbers. In the spring of 1973, the World Health Organisation reported that there were then on earth as many rats as there were human beings, namely 3.7 thousand million. We also have in common with rats the ability to adapt well to all sorts of circumstances.

Hart does not go much beyond that, but he remarks, for example, that both men and rats play a great deal when young, and that play is essential for proper development. A deprived rat, one brought up in a barren cell or cage alone, will be handicapped rat in later life. Readers in quest of further similarities to man might find them in the chapter on "The Behaviour of Rats". In the section on Sexual Behaviour.

It is particularly when the female is in oestrus - once every four or five

days in the laboratory - that she will be followed by all the males in her cage. . . . If the female is not in oestrus, she may kick the partner with one of her hind legs. . . . If the female is in oestrus, she will then take the initiative, rushing toward the male, sniffing at him, and then running off in a highly characteristic manner, with a cautious prancing or skipping movement. She will always run a few inches at a time and then sit down with raised head and quivering ears. . . . If the male does not follow her, the receptive female will approach him again, and again skip away. If he now follows and mounts her, she will raise her head higher still and her ears will begin to quiver. . . . If the male does not follow her, she will back track. Her back is now arched, the abdomen raised high. This posture is called *lordosis*. Rats has an index of proper names, a page of bibliography. If this book does not tell you all you ever wanted to know about black rats and the more prevalent brown rat, you may pursue the subject, guided by the author's books of reference. This is a fascinating study by a scientist whose speciality has always been rats. Though highly readable, Martin Hart never takes the reader by a wild surmise that might not be accurate.

Whither the worms

J. F. Watkins

ROBERT S. DESOWITZ

New Guinea Tapeworms and Jewish Grandmothers: Tales of Parasites and People
224pp. W. W. Norton. £9.25.
0 393 01474 6

Experts are often reluctant to talk about their subjects to laymen. The combination of natural courtesy (the listener may be bored) and arrogance (the listener is too ignorant to understand) is seen at its best in Oxford Senior Common Rooms, where it materializes as an embarrassed silence. Americans are different. For them, in Hazlitt's words, "whatever interests is interesting", and they rightly assume that what interests them will interest the man sitting next to them. All that matters is the presentation.

Parasitic worms, for example, can be very heavy going indeed: in the wrong hands the subject can be a social and intellectual disaster. Robert S. Desowitz is the right man for the job, with all his natural advantages. First, he is Professor of Tropical Medicine in the University of Hawaii. Second, he is a New Yorker. Internal evidence, gentle fish is an "ambrosial concoction" suggests that he is a Jewish New Yorker. We can therefore

expect a style that is free from any attempt at flax writing, pleasantly hard-boiled, humane without sentimentality, and spiced with mild wisecracks and vernacular expressions. This is what is provided, and it proves to be the most suitable literary idiom for talking about helminths and protozoa in a way which does not paralyze the audience with boredom or hysterical fear that at this very moment a dedicated meggot may be gnawing its way through their innards on its way to the brain. The idiom seeds careful heading; occasionally Desowitz nods three "right on!" in one page is perhaps excessive - but the overall effect is successful. The book could well be called "Table Talk of a Parasitologist", and I suspect that many a Hawaiian dinner party has been entertained by these stories before some more than usually intelligent hostess persuaded Desowitz to write it all down.

Images of evolution at its most pointless swim before our eyes. Consider. Schistosomes. The female worm lies for ever entangled in the male, attached to the wall of so abdominal vein. She does nothing but produce myriads of eggs which penetrate the intestine, or bladder, to reach the exterior. There the eggs hatch to produce little creatures which invade a water snail in whose body they become different little creatures which swim out to pierce the skin of a human who has business in the water.

Once past the skin a little creature makes for a precise position in the veins, meets another of the opposite sex, concludes the union and completes the cycle. Goethe would have loved the pertinacity of these Elective Affinities. The worm is innocent enough. It is our immune reactions that make it the scourge of Africa and Asia. Schistosomes provide a lesson about the dangers of tinkering with the environment, as the Volta River project has produced rates of infection rates from 1 per cent to 100 per cent in some lake-side villages. Let us not curse the Schistosoma too roundly, though - by attacking the Chinese Communist troops on the banks of the Yangtze it saved Taiwan.

Parasites create all kinds of moral problems. In addition to their nasty physical consequences. For example, the customs or religious rituals of a society often create the conditions for infection. The Japanese taste for raw fish results in severe cases of a year of anisakiasis (a worm boring into the intestinal wall), but Japanese culture would not crumble if the sale of raw fish were forbidden. In New Guinea, on the other hand, the eating of undercooked pig meat is a religious ritual essential to the life of the tribe. The pigs of one New Guinea tribe, the Ekari, have become infected with the pork tapeworm, and the inane habits of the tribesmen mean that they

swallow tapeworm eggs. The eggs develop into larvae which invade the body and often settle down in the brain to produce epilepsy. The tribe will be severely weakened by this cyclical process, but nothing can be done to stop it that would not destroy the society completely. Somalis hold stones and click them together when defaecating. As a result, a splendid concrete water-sealed set of latrines put up in a village to reduce the incidence of hookworm became totally blocked by the discarded stones. Medical microbiology in these situations turns into social anthropology.

It may well be that all attempts to eradicate the parasitic diseases like malaria, sleeping sickness, river blindness and other worm infestations are bound to fail unless tropical Africa, Latin America and South America can be completely covered in concrete and cement. Public health measures short of this extreme will produce local successes (usually temporary) but are in the end, useless. African trypanosomiasis will probably never be eradicated, but if some magic drug appeared the consequences could be worse than the disease. Dr Desowitz writes, "As trypanosomiasis is conquered, overgrazing, soil erosion, social disruption, and human extinction may result". It would have been more accurate to write "with result". In our latitudes infectious disease appears as something alien, and the low

temperatures prevent the more extravagant forms of parasitism. We are therefore conditioned to the idea that the neatly packaged, orderly bacteria and viruses which affect us can be wiped out or kept at bay without any disastrous ecological consequences. In the tropics, on the other hand, infectious agents like protozoa and worms are part of an enormous, pulsating, eco-system which is as tough and as resourceful as life itself. In that milieu human beings are nothing very special, just another link in the chain.

Why should anyone want to read a book like this? It can be read for the pleasure of contemplating some of the more bizarre of Nature's Wonders, but perhaps it should be read as a duty by anyone who does not understand why poor countries are poor. For medical students, who are overwhelmed by huge books of treatises which they must conquer, this is the best available text on parasitic diseases, although for this purpose it would be improved by illustrations. Indeed an appendix of photographs and charts should be added to the second edition for the enlightenment of any class of reader. Social anthropologists and spies will find the book essential for broadening their minds and contributing to their survival in the field - in Leningrad, for example, drinking tap water is almost certain to lead to Giardiasis, an odious flatulent condition which the natives avoid by drinking vodka.

Nature's bits and pieces

M. F. Perutz

FRANÇOIS JACOB

The Possible and the Actual
71pp. University of Washington Press
(AUPG). £6.30.
029595888 X

Twenty-one years ago I heard François Jacob lecture about the ingenious experiments which led him and Jacques Monod to discover how bacteria switch on different genes to adapt themselves in different foods. He lectured in immaculate English with razor-sharp logic that left no conceivable loophole, yet seemed to be free of the intellectual arrogance and to take his formidable powers of reasoning for granted, like good teeth, as a gift of Nature. The discovery solved one of the great puzzles in biology and brought him and Monod the Nobel Prize.

He has now written a short, popular book that sets his research in the context of the meaning of life. It comprises three lectures, on "Myth and Science", "Evolutionary Thinking" and "Time and Invention of the Future". His first lecture begins, in true French style, with the meaning of sex. How did it originate? I had believed it sprang from Adam's rib, but here I learn that in Plato's *Symposium* Aristophanes proposes, more correctly, that it was created by the splitting apart of hermaphrodites. According to the *Symposium* these spherical creatures were endowed with a bifacial head, four feet, four hands, and a double set of privates. Their strength and boldness began to worry Zeus who instructed Apollo to cut them into halves "as an egg with a hair". Jacob writes that this explains why, in the human body, reproduction is the only function performed by an organ of which an individual carries only one half, so that he has to waste an enormous amount of time and energy to find another half.

In fact, the origin of sex is unknown, even though a primitive form of it was discovered by William Hayes in the humble coli bacterium. Its biological purpose was first formulated almost, but not quite correctly, about 100 years ago by the German biologist August Weismann: "To produce individual differences through which natural selection creates new species." In sexual reproduction the parental genes are reshuffled twice; once in the production of germ cells and again after fertilization of the egg. As a result each progeny carries a different assortment of parental genes, Jacob writes. "Sex genes diversity which provides a safety margin against environmental uncertainty, but Weismann omitted mutation as an essential factor. Only when sexual reproduction is linked to random mutation and natural selection, does a gene population evolve. It evolves faster with sex than one without sex."

Jacob writes that virtually all biologists today believe in Darwinism, but this is not true of laymen. When Monod published his lectures on *Chance and Necessity*, setting out the molecular basis of evolution by random mutation and natural selection, he shocked European intellectuals because they could not accept the idea of life having evolved by chance rather than purposeful design. Even those who discounted a creator preferred Lamarck's instructional theory of evolution by inheritance of acquired characters. Jacob writes:

"Each carefully designed and strictly executed experiment planned to evaluate genetic instruction has shown it to be wrong... There is no molecular mechanism enabling instructions from the environment to be imprinted on DNA directly, that is, without the roundabout route of natural selection. Not that such a mechanism is theoretically impossible. Simply it does not exist."

All the same, any experiment purporting to prove the inheritance of acquired characters is hailed by the media as a well-deserved swipe at the

arrogant scientific establishment. R. M. Golezinski and E. J. Steele's recent experiments, which were supposed to prove the transfer of immunity acquired by the fathers of families of mice to their progeny, were heralded triumphantly by press and television, while Sir Peter Medawar and his colleagues' failure to reproduce Golezinski and Steele's results was passed over in silence.

Such experiments are carried out not only by cranks and frauds. In the 1950s Sir Cyril Hinshelwood, Nobel Laureate, President of the Royal Society and Professor of Physical Chemistry at Oxford, published paper after paper on the nutritional adaptation of bacteria by the inheritance of acquired characters. No biologist believed them. His prejudices blinded him to the true meaning of his observations, which was clarified eventually by Jacob and Monod.

It is often said that Darwinism is no more than a working hypothesis, and has never been proved, but this is no longer true. At a recent meeting in Cambridge commemorating the hundredth anniversary of Darwin's death, Manfred Eigen, the great German physical chemist, demonstrated a system of nucleic acid and protein that evolves in the test tube by random mutation and natural selection in accordance with mathematical laws that are as rigorous as Newton's laws of gravitation. Patricia Clarke from University College London told us how bacteria "learn" to feed on even the most exotic compounds synthesized by organic chemists, and proved that it all happens by random mutation and natural selection.

This same process has even given rise to a new, disease-resistant variety of man. In parts of West Africa, most children used to be killed by malaria. The only survivors were those who had become resistant to it. This resistance is not inherited. Once a child was born with a chance mutation in one of his haemoglobin genes. The offspring of that child who had inherited the mutant gene proved more resistant to malaria than the ones who had not, and more of them survived to reproductive age. This selection repeated itself generation after generation. The carriers of the mutant gene might eventually have replaced all the non-carriers, but in fact they had to pay a price for their advantage. When two carriers mated, half of their children on the average had the good luck to be carriers, but one quarter were afflicted by sickle cell anaemia, a severe blood disease that killed them before they grew up. Their deaths partly balanced the greater fitness of the carriers; with the result that over many generations an equilibrium between carriers and non-carriers established itself. Now most of the sickle cell carriers live in North and Central America, where their resistance to malaria is no longer an advantage and the anaemia of many of their children poses a grave health problem. Sickle cell anaemia is a case of Darwinian evolution in man that happened in comparatively recent times. It also illustrates Darwin's recognition that natural selection works relative to a specific environment.

We know that evolution happened and we know how much time it took, but we have little idea of how it worked. Were primitive forms of life made of primitive molecules which evolved then perfected to build more complex forms? Molecular biologists have discovered that, on the contrary, the same kinds of protein molecules are used for similar chemical functions by all organisms which are alive today. "What holds for coli bacteria is true for an elephant," was one of Monod's slogans. The proteins of even the most primitive organisms are unbelievably complex; they are made up of thousands of atoms woven into precisely ordered, three-dimensional fabrics. I cannot describe them by analogy to any familiar image because nothing like them exists in the macroscopic world. How did they arise? Jacob compares today's molecular biologists to the Renaissance anatomists who dissected the human body and described its intricate organs. To

rationalize the structures revealed by the microscope, sixteenth-century anatomists had to invoke God's will. To rationalize the structures revealed by X-ray analysis of proteins, twentieth-century biologists have to invoke natural selection. In both instances we are faced by the end-product of 3,000 million years of evolution and cannot guess its beginnings.

In fact, we can hardly expect to understand how, for instance, a wing evolved from a leg in the past, because we have no idea how the genes in a chicken embryo's chromosomes determine the growth of its wings today. Genetic information is laid down in a linear script. Since it is one-dimensional, we don't know how it specifies structures in three dimensions.

meeting in Cambridge David Attenborough showed a film of this phenomenon at its extreme. We saw fish in their millions coming to spawn on the beaches of Newfoundland; they died immediately afterwards and filled upon piles of their decaying bodies. What killed them? Jacob tells of biologists who pondered whether Nature had devised a specific death mechanism, a genetic programme which specifies, in the form of some chemical message, that an organism's time is over. He argues that there is no evidence for such a mechanism, and I doubt that one exists. In the Newfoundland fish, or in salmon, selective pressure to produce myriads of eggs and sperm must have been so great that spawning leaves these fish

too exhausted to survive. In mammals that have produced progeny, we merely see a piteous end, for lack of selective pressure, of the many mechanisms that had kept them fit to collect food and keep off predators. Jacob notes that ageing consists, in the alteration of a single organ or molecular system, but a general deterioration of the whole body. It is therefore not likely to be arrested by any miracle drug. "Like other scientific fantasies... the Fountain of Youth probably does not belong to the world of the possible."

Are mental effects different from physical ones? Jacob skims over the evolution of mind from chemotaxis in coli bacteria to perception in humans and argues that there has been continuous evolution of the brain from animals to man. Consequently, he finds it hard to believe that these mental events in man should have become different in kind from those in animals. Does nature or nurture determine how we think? Jacob is certain that our genetic make-up determines the anatomy of our brain, even if we do not understand how this is laid down in the genetic programme, but he suggests that our capacity to use our brain is influenced by the stimuli of our environment. It is neither a blank tape favoured by egalitarian Marxists nor the grammophone record insisted on by sociobiologists. He quotes the retarded mental development of emotionally deprived children as evidence that an individual's intellectual performance does not depend solely on his genetic inheritance, but he fails to mention nutritional deprivation in early childhood as evidence of mental deficiency. He also fails to mention the effects of our chosen from among 15,000 genes

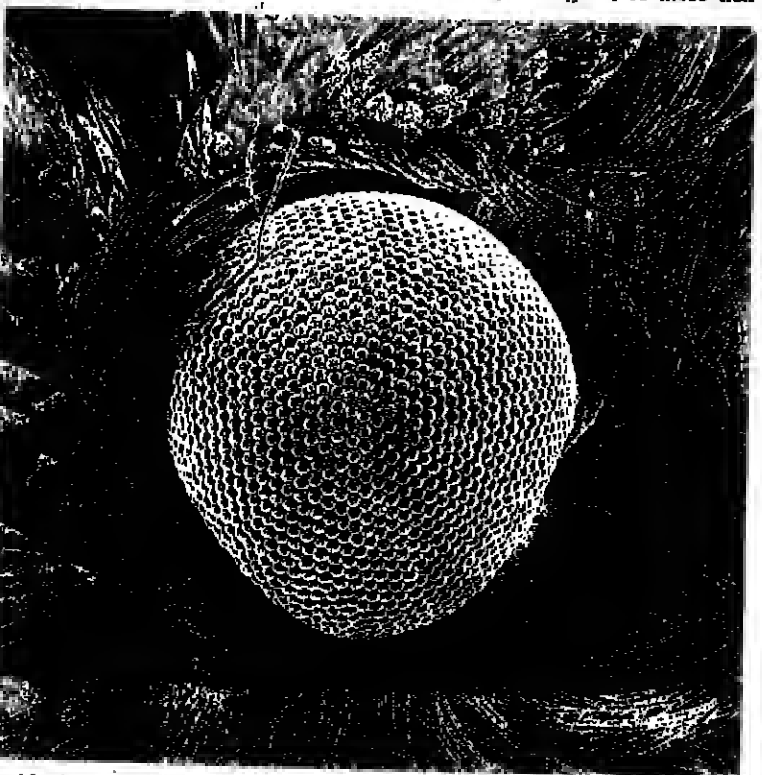
brains remain stunned whatever the genetic inheritance. Medicine's success in reducing infant mortality has been matched by our ability to secure nutritious food for the millions of babies that survive. Their deaths in infancy are setting up a vicious circle because it robs them of the mental ability to better their own lot and that of their children in the future.

Jacob wonders if the human brain needs to have a coherent and unified representation of the world such as the concepts of natural laws originate from the Greeks. Jacob laments that the scientists' objective world, rather than the myths which it suspended, is devoid of mind and soul of joy and sadness, of desire and hope. Science has robbed some of us of a heavenly father who gave direction and meaning to our lives, but it gives great joy to those that practise it, because its subtlety and beauty of the real world that science has unravelled is greater than that conjured up by even the most imaginative of Greek and Hebrew myths.

Jacob asks if it is possible for society to define a set of values directly, without resorting to myths which man himself has created and set over his destiny. Being aware of the philosophical tenet that values cannot be derived from facts, he leaves the question unanswered. I believe that from the Renaissance onwards society has led man to adopt a set of values quite different from some of Christ's teaching, or at least from the early interpretation of his teachings. In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus said: "Behold the birds of the heaven, for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather in the barns; and your heavenly father feedeth them... Be ye therefore anxious, saying, what shall we eat? What shall we drink? Wherewith shall we be clothed?... But seek ye his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you." Christ's teaching throughout the Dark and Middle Ages seem to have interpreted his injunction, and others, to mean that man should not strive to better his lot in this world, but prepare himself for the next. Science has reversed these values by convincing man that it lies in his power to improve the conditions of his own life and that of his fellow man in this world. Edison and Pasteur were the heroes of my boyhood, rather than saints and martyrs.

Jacob ends his book with an appeal for reason. "The enlightenment of the 19th century has the folly to consider reason to be the only necessary basis for the solution of all problems. Today it would be more foolish to decide, as some would like, that because reason is not sufficient, it is not necessary either."

Antarctic Wildlife, with photographs by Eric Hosking, a foreword by Keith Shackleton, and accompanying text by Brian Age, has just been published (150pp., with 146 photographs, 116 in colour, Croom Helm £12.95, 0 7099 1215 3). The book is a record of two voyages to the Antarctic. The first was to the Northern Peninsula, "that flat, desolate, shivering land, the main land mass like an inverted comma", the second, leaving from the port of Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego, was a "dramatic" expedition to the Antarctic. The book is divided into eight sections: "The Historical Background", "The Antarctic and its Ecology", "The Antarctic Continent", "The Subantarctic", "Penguins", "Inland Antarctica", "The King, the Adelle, the Gannet, the Chinstrap, the Macaroni and the Rockhopper", "Albatrosses" (Black-browed, Grey-headed, Yellow-nosed, Sooty, and Wandering), "Other Birds", and "Seals". The photographs chosen from among 15,000 are extremely fine.



Meeting more of the eye. This curiously creased golfball lying in a Rousseau-esque rough, one of the many startling photographs in *The Grand Design: Form and Colour in Animals* by Sally Roy and Oxford Scientific Films (238pp., Dent, £12.50, 0 460 04571 7). In fact the eye of a diamondback moth magnified about 250 times through an electron microscope. The hexagonal shapes are ommatidia, tiny tube-like visual units which form the compound eyes of certain insects. Generally, the more ommatidia an insect has the better its vision, but scientists are uncertain what it sees - probably just a kaleidoscope of light, colour and shade.

Sunset over the statute-book

J. R. Pole

GIORGIO CALABRESI

A Common Law for the Age of Statutes
319pp. Harvard University Press.
£17.50.
0 674 14604 2

What should be done about middle-aged laws? They no longer serve a useful social purpose, but they have enough life in them to cause trouble; and for not very reputable political reasons, they are often difficult to repeal. The problem is causing not merely congestion, but a congestion of anomalies. "Legal obsolescence", in Guido Calabresi's phrase, has called forth a variety of remedies, most of which he finds unsatisfactory or even dangerous.

Legal obsolescence is defined by two principal characteristics. First, the law does not "fit". It is visibly out of phase with what Calabresi, who is food of topographical imagery, calls "the legal landscape" (sometimes "the legal topography"). Secondly, it lacks legislative support, in the sense that if it were not on the statute book, the existing legislature would not enact it. Its authority rests on its once having commanded a legislative majority, presumed to have reflected a public mood because of the tide of statute law which has overtaken the former American reliance on common law jurisprudence. For this process, Calabresi insists on us the word "statutorification", which itself should be considered part of the punishment.

This form of anomaly is not confined to American jurisprudence. In Britain, whenever someone is prosecuted under the blasphemous laws the question is asked as to whether these laws make sense - whether they "fit" - in our present-day world of secular ideas and sociological explanations. The incongruity is all the more acute because the laws protect only the Christian religion in a multi-religious society. It seems unlikely that any present parliament would adopt the blasphemous laws in their present form - perhaps in any form. But present parliaments do not seem in a hurry to repeal them. The mere existence of a law constitutes an inertial force in favour of its survival, especially when the questions involved are subject to special sensitivities or to the pressure of organized interests.

Calabresi's theme emerges in the answer to two central questions: should old statutes have greater survival value than old common law rules? And if not, who should decide? "My own conclusion", he says, "is that there is nothing in democratic or majoritarian theory which supports the notion that old statutes, as a group, are more entitled to a conservative bias than old common law rules, or that courts are less suited than legislatures (least checked and balanced ones) to question the appropriateness of that bias in a particular rule or statute." The problem has special weight in the United States, where the separation of powers has confided to the courts a considerable, and perhaps too much, opportunity to make policy through the interpretation of statutes.

Calabresi is plainly concerned about the underlying question of legitimacy in a democracy. The whole moral authority of a statute is based on its command - or its former command - of a legislative majority which is presumed to represent an electoral majority. But there is a paradox here. For American legislation is peculiarly liable to be based on coalitions, favours and log-rolling that have only the remotest connection with majority opinion. And this character of the American legislative process makes it particularly difficult to put together a coalition to repeal a law which affects the public good, does not touch many private interests, and is "unacceptable" to the people of the United States. The majority hoped to have killed capital punishment, only to find state legislatures bounding back with a state of new laws, drafted so far as possible to meet the Court's objections (which are referred in part to the inequality of the incidence of the penalty).

Toquevillian argument). Another is that a large number of judges sitting in different courts have somewhat the same function. (And it doesn't matter all that much if one of them occasionally "guesses" wrong.)

The main force of the argument, however, is based on the superior qualifications of judges. It is they who are most highly trained to survey the legal landscape, to notice significant connections and to identify prevalent or oncoming trends and therefore to judge any particular law to be obsolescent in the light of a general movement of law and opinion.

Judicial policy is not the only possible solution, and Calabresi reviews others, each of which he finds unsatisfactory. The first and least effective is Bickel's recommendation of "the passive virtues" - meaning inaction by the courts in order to indicate the need for legislative action (which does not always follow). This is akin to "temporary nullification" suggested by both Bickel and Wellington, by which the court can send a statute back to the legislature for a "second look" without actually declaring it unconstitutional. The frequently applied remedy of judicial interpretation is liable to involve the court in much dubious reading of legislative intent and in tendentious argument, and has the additional disadvantage that the court may nullify an unconstitutional law which only needs amendment or which in fact does prove to command continued support.

All these methods are intended to promote some sort of colloquy between courts and legislatures, but much can go wrong in the mutual attribution of intentions. A rather popular legislative device is the enactment of "sunset laws". These contain a built-in provision for their own termination, but there are difficulties here too. Laws age at different rates, and part of the problem arises from the initial fact that legislators cannot easily foresee the ageing process. Legislative committees set up to review such laws may easily become committees for their automatic re-enactment and are subject to the hazards of legislative politics. European countries have established separate supra-courts to review legislation; Calabresi is convinced that the American system will channel all such issues towards the Supreme Court. "Judicial sunset" (sunsetting) of his heartiest recommendation will not work any better if entrusted to special law-reform commissions; they have in the past confined themselves to technical rather than policy questions and would probably do so in the future.

According to Calabresi, "Most laws create their own landscapes or become increasingly out of place." And the courts are by training and character the best judges of what is "in place". A good example of his preferred procedure occurred in *Grissold v. Connecticut* (1965) in which the Supreme Court of the United States declared Connecticut's archaic anti-coercion law unconstitutional. The law was flagrantly disobeyed throughout the state but no legislature dared repeal it. The Supreme Court reached the people of Connecticut better by finding that the law violated individual rights which had already been established under the penumbra of the Constitution, than the wretched law withered away. On the other hand, in *Purman v. Georgia* (1972) Calabresi's thesis faces a severe test - which it perhaps narrowly survives. The Supreme Court, vollog 5-4, held the death penalty unconstitutional; held that it "had become", unconstitutional would be nearer the mark, in the light of changing public opinion. It was "a cruel and unusual" partly because of its increasing rarity, partly because of its extreme character. According to Mr. Justice Marshall, it was "unacceptable" to the people of the United States. The majority hoped to have killed capital punishment, only to find state legislatures bounding back with a state of new laws, drafted so far as possible to meet the Court's objections (which are referred in part to the inequality of the incidence of the penalty).

In subsequently upholding several of these laws the Court accepted the fact of re-enactment as evidence of their continued constitutionality. In effect the Court was obliged to admit that it had misread the legal landscape. But here Calabresi's humane preferences speak louder than his legal judgment, and he blames the Court for taking at face value at least one of these legislative re-enactments. Apparently he feels that the Court should have looked behind Connecticut's House vote to discern the psychology of legislative intent, and should have continued to hold the view that the death penalty was contrary to the drift of opinion. One effect of this would be to deprive legislatures of responsibility for their own votes - a state of affairs which tends to be induced by judicial review, and has done much to bring about the present impasse.

At heart, Calabresi thinks more highly of judges than of legislators - especially state legislators. This amounts to rather more than he admitted by his view that lawyers are best suited to map the legal landscape. His theory is based on the assumption that law is in a constant state of drift, moving in essentially the same direction as the drift of public opinion (drift being perhaps preferable to "landscape", which is normally thought of as static). When he speaks of laws as creating their own landscape he could be taken to refer to their effects on the interpretation of other laws. He has not assigned himself the task of explaining how changes do come about in public opinion; and he thus only indirectly implies recognition of a factor in the formation of public opinion of which lawyers and law professors are not generally unaware - and that is the influence of law itself. In such a heterogeneous country as the United States, where the Constitution is one of the great unifiers of sentiment, the influence of law on opinion may be considered particularly significant.

Throughout the long campaign for civil rights legislation one of the most cogent arguments was probably that law could and would exert a progressive influence on opinion; and no one can reasonably doubt that, in the long run, *Brown v. Board of Education* and related cases did have that effect. In conferring on the judges the power to write off obsolete statutes, Calabresi is confiding to them the responsibility not only for deciding whether a particular law "fits the legal landscape", but whether its gravitational pull will be beneficial in creating a new landscape, and that creation must also turn on whether in their opinion that new landscape will be an improvement on the existing one.

There are obvious objections in principle to Professor Calabresi's views and we can be sure that they will get a good airing when this book is reviewed in the American law journals. But he is dealing with the situation that exists, not the one that might have been differently tackled sixty or so years ago. Those who are not convinced will have to do some hard thinking to construct a better method. But his case rests heavily on the superior quality of the judiciary, which may be an exciting condition but is hardly a necessary condition of American public life. If the judiciary "sings" as this question-marks the future of the future, if they get it right, it is a role to which they will at times be hard to distinguish from guardians.

The papers presented at the 50th anniversary of the Social Science Research Building at the University of Chicago, in December 1979 have now been edited by William H. Kruskal and published under the title of *The Social Sciences: Their Nature and Uses* (166pp. University of Chicago Press, £8.40, 0 226 43499 1). The eleven contributors include Marshall Sahlins on "Individual Experience and Cultural Order", Herbert A. Simon on "Are Social Problems Problems?", Lee J. Cronbach on "Can Science Solve?", and Robert M.erton on "The Structure of Social Inquiry". The majority hoped to have killed capital punishment, only to find state legislatures bounding back with a state of new laws, drafted so far as possible to meet the Court's objections (which are referred in part to the inequality of the incidence of the penalty).

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S. J. Newman

STEPHEN BENATAR

Wish Her Safe at Home
220pp. Bodley Head. £6.95.
0 370 30491 8

With this marvellous book, character and poetry return to the English novel. It is the story of a middle-aged, middle-class spinster, Rachel Waring, who inherits from her great-aunt a house in Bristol, once the home of an eighteenth-century philanthropist. She gives up her flat and job in London and goes to live there, finding a scatty hippiness in the place, the people and the task she sets herself, of writing the philanthropist's biography. Gradually, however, scattiness degenerates into madness.

The story is simple, the implications are complex. Rachel is one of the great English female characters, like the Wife of Bath or Clara Fenchington: both an individual and a species. Stephen Benatar isn't so much inventing her as being possessed by her. Indeed, he can't understand her, Rachel's own

notion for her biography, "of working my way, feeling a wonderful and enriching instinct for the creation of links" is her creator's method, and from one angle the novel is a huge dramatic poem with Rachel starring in the greatest story ever told - her own. She is Scarlett O'Hara, Blanche DuBois, Snow White and Miss Havisham all rolled into one. She lives in a gorgeous soap opera, her Badesas prose winking with silly jokes, old songs, spontaneous aphorisms (you could compile a concordance of her sayings) and mad, tragic poetry. Her lovers include the dead philanthropist, her gardener, her chemist, her vicar, and an adolescent who ejaculates into her suspenders, to her eternal chagrin. She carries the banner for "poor disappointed ladies all", valiantly proclaiming herself the epitome of "the fun-group, the life enhancers, the anti-stodge".

To say she lives with gusto would be an understatement. She is a stream of semi-consciousness puckered by little genteel mannerisms. Bursts of violence choke her speech. Graveyards open in her mind. She buttonholes you with her horrible clutching confidences, is always pawing at people, and clisms

she's murdered her brother. She suddenly needs to talk about disembowelling to a stranger in a train, and refers in a knowing way to compulsions "to punch a baby's stomach in the pram, or to use on someone standing next to you the carving knife you hold" (the buoyancy of the prose is typical). She has recurring fancies about things in dark corners, or being buried alive. She gushes vicarious emotions while writing her biography, but is a blank to the world around her. When eventually her conscience is probed she goes forth into the streets of Bristol, showering victims with bright sayings and her eternal false gaiety, barging into their lives with advice and assistance, pressing clean pound notes into grubby hands. Men fall off motorbikes and women collapse with epilepsy at her approach.

But there is a deeper disturbance present which is only partly related to Rachel's social character, and which reminds you of the flurry of panic and disaster that sometimes ruffles the surface of Larkin's poetry. The book is so confused and incoherent as its protagonist. Some primitive battle for mastery is going on, and it is hard to tell

whether Rachel is murdering or being murdered. Her attempt to obliterate the characters around her into fantasy boomerangs on her, as it endows them with the shadowy menace of myth and nightmare. The author is equally ambiguous; he is overwhelmed by his creation, but you see nevertheless to his credit him treating her as Hitchcock might have treated Miss Bates if he had filmed *Ennui*.

The sense of menace is related to the sense of form: Rachel's theatrical character is strait-jacketed by the novel. As with Browning's mad-house soliloquies, the reader can't escape judgment; that's why it's a poetic

novel, not just a novel with a "character" in it. Rachel is everything the Houyhnhnms need to suppress hysteria, frenzy, a wild, vague evangelism. Her world is full of passionately if she has a cause. At the end she goes raving mad, preying on her knees in a crowded bus, preying on embroidered silk while the "redskins" are running towards her in their white coats. Rachel the tragedienne, or Rachel weeping for her children? She remains an enigma. "A charmed life that carried a curse," she wonders to herself, "or a cursed life that carried a charm?" Well, we shall find out.

Fast ladies

Jennifer Uglov

FRANCES VERNON

Privileged Children

199pp. Michael Joseph. £7.95.
0 7181 2165 1

Frances Vernon is a Cambridge undergraduate, a young woman historian whose first novel is, not surprisingly, about youth, women and history. Her confident prose sweeps us along with the fortunes of a group of London artists and intellectuals at the beginning of the century, past the rocks of Fabianism, women's suffrage and the First World War, to the General Strike and the beginning of the Depression. She steers us through the sexual revolution, from the days when, she suggests, prostitution was the only profession open to an independent but unqualified woman, to discussion of free love and lesbianism. *The Interpretation of Dreams* and *The Well of Loneliness* are noted as the minutiae of daily life with painstaking care, from Alice bands to orange lipstick, and her very names raise ghosts from Augustus - and, Clementine, the Bohemian of 1904, to Tuffy and Joan Howard, bright young things of 1931.

The children of the title are Alice, the artist heroine, daughter of a wayward Irish beauty, Dinna Molloy; her own daughter Flóra; her step-daughters Liza and Jenny and her model Miranda, a fugitive from an exclusive boarding school. Their privilege is to grow up outside the rigid confines of a traditional British upbringing. Alice herself eagerly overturns conventional patterns: at the age of eight she spies on her mother in bed with a rich lover (Bored, Alice sat back and banged her head on the window, which shattered in its frame), and at nine she deals coolly with creditors. She takes a lover at thirteen, becomes pregnant at fifteen to escape the chaperonage of her country-curate uncle, rejects her children, marries solely to legitimize her daughter, has an abortion and falls in love with the fourteen-year-old Miranda. By the end of the book she is lined and withered: "Her thin arms and legs protruded, naked, and greyish,

A conference on "Imagined Realities in Contemporary Women's Writing" will be held at Dyffryn House, St. Nicholas, near Cardiff from October 29 - 31. The conference, which has been organized by the Welsh Arts Council and Yr Academi Gymreig (English Language Section) will include contributions from Margaret Atwood, Beryl Bainbridge, Fay Weldon, Angela Carter, Emma Tennant, Ruth Fainlight and Eliza Lewis Roberts. Further details from Sue Harris, Yr Academi Gymreig, Cory Building, 57 Bute Street, Cardiff CF1 6QP.

Fascism's friend

Julian Symons

DANIEL FARSON

Henry: An Appreciation of Henry Williamson

246pp. Michael Joseph. £8.95.
0 7181 2122 8

Henry Williamson was in several respects an uncomfortable man to know, and Daniel Farson treats him with admiration but uneasily, shifting often between factual accounts of passages in the life and chatty personal reminiscence. Is he writing a biography? Not exactly, because the definitive biography "will be written by his son Richard" who has access to all the papers. Not a literary assessment either, although he lets us know that Williamson's fifteen-volume *Chronicle of Ancient Sunlight* has been compared with *Proust* and *Dickens*, and makes a few comparisons of his own between Williamson and Dickens from which Williamson emerges favourably. Nor is this "one of those books so popular today which denigrate famous men and slip too easily into newspaper serialization": no denigrator, for sure, is Daniel Farson. So why write the book, and what kind of work is it? He feels that at times he treated Williamson sharply, although this is hardly apparent from the narrative, and this account of a friend and Devon neighbour is meant to redress the balance. By the time it was completed "I understood Henry Williamson better and liked him more."

It is unlikely that many readers will have the same reaction. Williamson emerges from this account as an eccentric with an enormous ego, a self-pitying figure who behaved with brutal insensitivity to his wives, a cantankerous man who blew up small quarrels, such as that with the author's father Negley Farson, into monumental rows, a braggart and a liar. He kept a Military Cross prominently displayed in a glass case, with the clear implication that it had been awarded to him for services in the

First World War. When Farson wrote to the Ministry of Defence, however, he was told that Henry Williamson had received no MC. His reaction to the discovery shows the almost unlimited extent of his tolerance of Williamson. At first he was shocked. "It seemed that I had caught Henry out in the worst sort of lie." But he rapidly recovered. Things surely could not be what they seemed. Williamson, after all, had never said in Farson's hearing that he had won the MC. Perhaps he had bought the medal at a sale, or better still it might have belonged to a friend who had given it to him, "in which case possession would be wholly honourable."

In the same glass case Williamson kept his other favourite possession (the words are Farson's): a swastika armband. In the 1930s Williamson became a member of the Fascist movement, and a great admirer of Hitler ("whose life symbol is the happy child") and Sir Oswald Mosley. More unusually, he held these beliefs during and after the war, until his death in 1977. What Mosley had wanted, he explained to anybody prepared to listen patiently, was to get on with the welfare state. Unfortunately he had been a little before his time, and so had been persecuted. The concentration camps and the deaths of six million Jews? We hear nothing of Williamson's views on such things, but are assured that he was not antisemitic. Perhaps he made no distinction between Jews and the many other kinds of people he disliked.

Mr Farson's attitude towards Williamson's Fascism is typically equivocal. He does not exactly defend it, but asserts his subject's lifelong patriotism, admits his political naivety, and complains that he was much worse treated than a left-wing Soviet agent like Anthony Blunt. The comparison is pointless, for if Blunt had been officially known to be recruiting agents or passing secret material to the Soviet Union during the war he would no doubt have been imprisoned. In the war years Williamson became exceedingly unpopular among the country people near his Norfolk farm,

because he insisted on emphasizing his support of Hitler by such gestures as painting the Fascist lightning flash on his house and car. It was said that some villagers shot through the farm windows at the naked light bulbs he showed in defiance of the black-out, and that the contents of his dustbins were sifted by neighbours presumably looking for pro-German documents. Williamson's proud claim that he had been arrested and imprisoned without trial, however, proved to be one with the presumptive MC. The Norfolk Chief Constable found that he had spent only one night in the cells before being released as a harmless eccentric.

"As for his sympathy with the German people, can we altogether condemn him?" The question so disingenuously put ignores the fact that Williamson's sympathy was not with "the German people" but with the Nazi dictatorship. The differences between Williamson's views, and those of other writers, like E. E. Schattschneider, Lewis, who at one time looked for authoritarian solutions to the problems of the 1930s, were enormous. Their views proceeded from opposition to the liberal feeling that had prevailed in most of Europe for a century, and were given intellectual backing, cautious in Eliot's case, rash in Lewis's, in books and articles. Both had rejected Fascism as a respectable intellectual creed before the outbreak of the Second World War. Such thoughts never entered Williamson's head, and indeed the whole process of thinking was ungenial to him. He merely knew that Hitler was a good man (he indulged a fantasy that they had met in the Christmas Day fraternization of 1914), and felt happiness and goodness suffusing the audience when he attended a Nuremberg rally. It would be charitable to say that in politics he was a simple-minded man.

Was he also personally a wholly detestable one? Evidently not. He retained Farson's sympathy, he had other friends, the young loved him, mentally, and some of them also physically. You either loathed this half-crazed English eccentric, or found him a delightful character who could be

The allusive round

Alan Bell

RUPERT HART-DAVIS (Editor)

The Lyttelton Hart-Davis Letters: Volume IV, 1939

186pp. John Murray. £12.50.
0 7195 3941 2

By the time of this fourth volume Rupert Hart-Davis' mind, George Lyttelton are firmly set in their epistolary stride, and since the relationship with Mrs. Simon were shot in England? And with answers to his own rhetorical questions about Agatha Christie's attitude towards the Army & Navy Stores? Would her affection have survived its renovation and rebuilding in the mid-seventies? Probably."

Osborne's discussion of the Mary Westmacott novels is more appropriate. Interesting, though, the descriptions suggest that the valuation he places on them as literature is more than a thought-exaggerated. Certainly his view that in these novels "the author is freed of the requirements to steer her characters along certain paths so that they can be manipulated into making the right moves to establish the necessary pattern that a crime novel must have" does nothing to inspire confidence in his literary judgment. Agatha Christie still awaits a definitive biography (if such a thing is complete), necessary? and awaits too, a detailed study of her own work. Such a study would have to grapple with two main tasks. It would have to attempt a formal analysis of the Christie method and show how many tricks there actually are in her repertoire. Secondly, it would have to haphazardly offer an opinion as to why her novels are only outsold by the Bible and Shakespeare. And the answer to this last would not be, as Mr. Osborne appears to believe, that she is the best crime novelist around.

Rupert Hart-Davis's busy publishing life continues to retard the completion of the Oscar Wilde edition, though further batches of material come to light while editorial work proceeds. An enervating attack of jaundice makes his annual holiday in the south of France a veritable ordeal, resulting in the autumn when the London

minor achievement, flinched by too great an insistence on personal feelings. The nature books show the patient sympathy for animals that Williamson never extended to human beings, but they can hardly be taken as the work of a great writer. Perhaps, after all, his son Richard might be well advised not to use the "vast documentation" Henry Williamson left behind for that definitive biography. It might be wiser to let Mr. Farson's book serve as the friendliest possible picture of this lovable or hateful old grouch.



"Pensum and dog, Hattie Savate", from John Berger and Jean Mohr's *Another Way of Telling* (300pp. Writers and Readers. £6.95. 0 906495 69 5).

September Books from Yale

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BODLEY HEAD

commentary

Running conditions

Andrew Hislop

Mike Leigh Season
BBC TV

'Try acting'. Laurence Olivier is reputed to have told Dustin Hoffman when "the Method", which demanded that he became the Marquis de Mande, threatened to cause his physical collapse. It is a measure of Mike Leigh's skill as a dramatist of improvisation, who creates plays by making actors first become characters and then letting scenes evolve, that his work does not invite more often the suggestion that he should try writing. No doubt the RSC administration were sorely tempted when the failure of a play to "evolve" in rehearsal led to the cancellation of their Mike Leigh production; and, judging from the snippets shown on television, the improvised play about improvising a play, which Arena commissioned for their profile of Leigh, seemed in dire need of some *deus ex machina*, if not a mortal at a typewriter. But there are also times even in the fittest and funniest of the plays (and at their best they are exquisitely comic and cruelly poignant) when pace, dialogue or plot could have been improved by a contrived intervention. Leigh does impose himself on a production sufficiently to claim "authorship"; but his reluctance to interfere is such that with *Grown-Ups*, the story of a young couple plagued by the wife's spinster sister, he waited hours for the actress who played the sister to discover for herself what he knew to be the film's crucial dramatic development — her finding refuge in the house next door when thrown out by the couple.

The television prolix, however, does not give the impression of an exponent of hard-line group theatre. Leigh admits the influence of Peter Brook but eschews the mysticism ascribed to by the more monastic of theatrical communities and champions over quills in the recent film *My Dinner with André*. Support with Mike would produce not so much anecdotes of actors trying out their characters' traits in the real world, as commentary on human "running conditions" (as Leigh calls these traits) rather than a running commentary on the Human Condition: Antony Sher in the character of a Saudi prince for

Gossip really being taken by a taxi-driver for an ailing Arab armed with ladies of the night, a Dorset pub astonished as some of the cast of *Nuts in May* suddenly come out of loutish character. Leigh's actors, for the most part excellent, clearly enjoy and respond to the creative role they are given. One of them found it particularly profitable when her character developed a running condition of shop-lifting — not an obviously unprofitable preparation for her brief non-purloining appearance on the screen. Phil Davies, a superb portrayal of the young miscontent in both scripted and improvised drama, found, however, his presence in bed with an actress for the recording of a love scene in a radio play (untransmitted) disturbingly authentic. Some running conditions are easier to handle than others.

The compulsive combinations of obsessive characteristics with which Leigh guides us through the English class system produce a particular form of comedy of manners — what might be called the theatre of embarrassment. It is not merely that it reveals in the awkward encounter rather than the tragic confrontation (Laurence's heart-attack in *Abigail's Party* is only a *faux pas*, an untimely mortal grovel on the Axminster), but that the characters themselves are embarrassments. Leigh makes his actors develop their characters in isolation before they "interact" with each other but, as David Edgar has pointed out, this often results in an attitude of contempt towards them. In the four major works in this season (*Nuts in May*, *Abigail's Party*, *Who's Who*, *Grown-Ups*) there are very few sympathetic characters and their unappealing traits are often exaggerated to the point of caricature. As a result we are less moved by the situations they find themselves in. The ghastliness of the sister's predicament in *Grown-Ups* engenders less pity because she is so ghastly. (A more recent film, *Home Sweet Home*, does, however, portray the relationship of a postman to his daughter in care in a very moving manner.)

Of the sexes, women are the more cruelly treated: Beverly in *Abigail's Party* is a paragon of awfulness even surpassing the sister in *Grown-Ups*, and her curried-pilchard-loving friend, Angie, a worthy support; of the classes, the lower-middle — of the sociopathic, snobbish stockbroker's clerk and his cat-obsessed wife in



"Girl with a Racquet", an engraving of 1742 by F. B. Leplat père from the exhibition Prints after J. B. Chardin at the Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge.

Who's Who, the folk-singing, vegetarian couple nutty in *May*, Laurence and Beverly crossing spiritual cocktail sticks over Demis Roussos and sub-erotic blue-period prints from the school of Waulworth. The upper classes, represented only in *Who's Who*, get off surprisingly lightly — silly (sometimes very) rather than insane and, in the case of the senior stockbroker, more privileged than absurd.

Patterns emerge not only in characterization but also in dramatic momentum — long periods of slow pace being broken by sudden conflict. These running conditions in the character of Leigh's drama belie the quality that has often been used to describe it — a heightened naturalistic realism. Undoubtedly, many acute observations of human behaviour are incorporated into his work (more so than in that of many individual authors) but imitation, still less caricature, is not a passport to reality; and, a theatre which is based on characters constricted in isolation, rather than the imitation of the activity of a social group, tends to create

Shakespeare shanghaied

S. Schoenbaum

International Shakespeare Conference
Stratford-upon-Avon

At the International Shakespeare Conference held at Stratford-upon-Avon in 1980, Professor Philip Brockbank, lately installed as director of the University of Birmingham's Shakespeare Institute, stirred the delegates when he introduced Professor Lin Tuen-chi, a rather fragile older man. Lin had come from Pusan University in Shanghai. He carried a scroll, inscribed in Chinese characters, with a poem paying tribute to the Institute and its director. Professor Lin has since died, but the Chinese connection, among the newcomers at this year's conference, the twentieth, were Professor Ying Zhouban from Peking University and Professor Li Gu-sun, director of the newly established Shakespeare Library at Pusan.

Some of us were a little apprehensive about the prospect of meeting Stratford for only last summer Shakespeare Congress, which meets every five years in a different venue. As things worked out, some 170 of the faithful turned up, from Kent and Cheshire, from Tbilisi State University, Soviet Georgia and the University

Georgia in the New World Athens, from thirty countries all told. I didn't meet the delegate listed in the programme as from the Polish Writers' Union, although I understand, he showed up; but the East Germans were absent, including a man from Humboldt University down for an address. Those who came were impressed with the generally high standard set by the papers.

Professor Lu dwelt on the relatively recent enthusiasm for *Hamlet*, as for Shakespeare generally. In the People's Republic of China, after a ten-year freeze, translations and studies now abound; a China Shakespeare Society flourishes in the lakeside city of Hangzhou, and a Tibetan play, *Hamlet*, had been successfully produced in Tibet, with a Tibetan cast. This paper, like most of the others, suited well the accommodating conference theme, "Shakespeare and the Twentieth Century".

The Nigerian playwright Wole Soyinka, from the University of Ife, talked unloquently about Shakespeare, holding on modern dramatics, and in doing so made the Arabic connection — the Nile must have flowed in the veins of Sheikh Zabit *Grown-Ups*. Others were occupied with the self that Auden brought to the Shakespearean mirror, or with other moderns — Stephen Crane, E. E. Cummings, or, as I thoughtfully

Edwards placed *Hoinlet* in the context of modern criticism and the modern textual studies had their innings when Dr Stanley Wells challenged, with stimulating lucidity, the traditional editorial recourse to conflation of the 1608 Quarto and 1623 Folio texts of *King Lear*, characterized as a pair of legitimate — although far from identical — twins.

The RSC offered an ampler menu of evening diversions than to some recent seasons. The gorgeous and unabashedly romantic *Much Ado About Nothing* — directed by Terry Hands and designed by Ralph Koltai and the magical *Tempest* of Ron Daniels, won greatest applause. Derek Jacobi holding audiences in the palm of his hand as both Benedick and Prospero. I had several years earlier much enjoyed Michael Gambon as the dim-witted veterinary Tom in Alan Ayckbourn's *Norman Conquests*, so naturally I had great expectations of his Lear; but these alas were disappointed. Adrian Noble's gimmicky production enthralled some conferees, repelled others, and left the rest (myself included) disturbingly undisturbed.

Conference innovations this year included replicas and plans connected with projected reconstructions of the Globe playhouse, one in its original American habitat, the other in Middle Ages. Detroit, also an exhibition of illustrated and theatrical designs by the incomparable C. J. Walker

Hodges. Many took advantage of the opportunity to pad about in the peddock behind Mason Croft, where our meetings were held; there Hodges had laid out, in vinyl-coated strips, a ground plan, at full size, of the Globe reconstruction for Detroit.

The first conference concert ever conducted in Shakespeare's Gold Chapel by Collo Timms, featured the baritone Christopher Underwood and that fine soprano Elizabeth Lapp, along with nine instrumentalists, in a programme of rarely performed eighteenth-century pieces inspired by Shakespeare. William Boyce's beguiling "Gode to the Memory of Shakespeare" was given for only the second time in this century, and was enthusiastically received, as were the other pieces.

Members of the Riverside Actors' Workshop will present their new production *News at Riverside*, Studio, Crisp Road, Hammersmith, London W6, from September 24 to October 3 at 9.30pm. The play was specially created through improvisation and rehearsal by David Leveaux and was first presented at the Edinburgh Festival. The cast is Caroline Embil, Piers Ibbotson, Shona Morris, Roderick Smith and Michele Wale. Also at Riverside: Studios, a survey exhibition from the resources of the National Theatre Museum may be seen until October 3.

commentary

The betrayal of an idea

P. N. Furbank

LUIOT PIRANDELLO

The Rules of the Game
Theatre Royal, Haymarket

The fog, or fog, of philistinism is pretty thick. I am sorry to say, at the Haymarket. Here is a writer who is, perhaps, not quite Ibsen, but whose ideas are by now part of our equipment and whose challenges still have some power to disturb. Here too is a play with, perhaps, not quite the weight of its successors *Six Characters and Henry IV* — still, we felt keyed-up at the prospect of witnessing it. Sad to report then, that the evening is largely disastrous: not obviously disastrous, but imperceptibly blighted, by the endemic pest of factiousness.

One way of coping, in the West End, if you are not quite sure what to make of a play, is to show that you have kept your sense of humour and your sense of proportion. It is to send the play up, ever so slightly but continually, and to play for easy laughs — it does not matter too much at what. Further, it is to respect a certain axiom: that if a stage character expounds an idea he is probably a weirdo, and the laugh is automatically against him.

In *The Rules of the Game*, the marriage of Leone and Silla Galla has fallen disastrously apart, and Leone has found a bizarre solution, both to this and to life generally. The way to master any given human imbroglio, he has discovered, is by a sort of weasel's trick. You suck the life and humanity out of it and are left with an egg-shell, a pure form, which may offer aesthetic pleasure, and which at least you can do what you like with — crush it in your palm if you so decide. To play this game you must respect rules — all rules, both those you construct for yourself and those that are imposed on you.

Thus Leone leaves Silla, moving to a bachelor flat, and giving her total freedom; nevertheless he is still a husband, the shell of a husband, and according to the rules husbands look after wives. So, by rigid treaty, he visits her each day for a certain half hour, measured exactly by the watch; or for preference he stays downstairs and inquires after her from the conelarge. As a result, of course, Silla, who had been driven mad by his presence, as he had been by hers, is driven even more crazy by his presence in *obsessiva*. There now seems no escape from him in the whole universe, and to take lover proves no remedy. At last, though, fate seems to offer Silla a relief and a revenge on Leone. By a stroke of good fortune, and with a little help from herself, she has her honour insulted by a group of tipsy men-about-town; and what do the rules say about insulted wives, even those with a lover? Why, that their husband must risk his life to avenge the dishonour. So she rushes gleefully to her husband, thinking, poor innocent, that she is learning the "game".

How this question of *detachment* obsessed writers in the aesthetic period Henry James, as we know, found in it one of his nearest themes. That the artist, with his passion for form, may be, perhaps must be, a monster and a menace to humanity: this was a possibility he explored with passion. As for Pirandello, he could not let the theme alone, pursuing it through a labyrinth of ironies, genial as well as implacable (but always self-accusing). There is a wonderful little story, "La tragedia d'un personaggio", about a certain Dr Fileno who has discovered a panacea against life, which is to read history books from morning till night, and to see the present as a part of history — to a word, to turn himself into an inverted telescope. He is the creation of a third-rate novelist, and is most dissatisfied. As he tells Pirandello, his idol of an author does not really appreciate what he has created: it is his duty, so to the Doctor, to tell him, to create him over again and properly this time. When Pirandello demurs, he becomes quite heated — but

this, as Pirandello points out to him, is most illogical. "So go away", he tells the Doctor. "Console yourself with the...". (He means "telescope" but has too much delicacy to pronounce the word.)

The Rules of the Game was based by Pirandello on an earlier story of his, "Quando s'è capito il guoco" ("When you have Understood the Game"). The story was purely fabulous and schematic, and to make a play of it he had to flesh it out with character and sentiment, and he did so with some, though maybe not with total, success. He manages to make us feel for Silla, in her hysteria, and it is a Pirandellian feat to make her genuine desperation farcical. Otherwise, though, Silla is a little sketchy; and her lover Ouldo is not much more than "The Lover". Leone, however, has a great deal in him, and at various moments he is touching, and engaging, and horrifying, without damage to the idea he originally embodied.

Disturb or betray this idea, however, even slightly, and you are left with no play to enjoy. And essential to this idea, it would seem, is that Leone, engaged in his weird "game", is formidable. Only thus does Silla's hysteria have significance and become interesting. Here we come here to the damning problem that faces Leonard Rossiter. He is, as we know, a very nice actor, if on the strength of *Rising Damp*, a somewhat limited one. He represented there, as it were, only a

fragment of the late Tony Hancock — the purely underdog portion. Never even for a moment, as the resigned drop of his mouth told us, could he, unlike Hancock, actually believe in himself as overdog. Still, we loved him in *Rising Damp* from our mind when we witness the same mannerisms: the same nervous balancing up and down on the heels, the same sudden sagging at the knees and withdrawal of the head into the protecting shoulders at another of fate's foul blows? These spell underdog to us; and can an underdog be formidable? Well yes, he can, in Dostoevsky; and I thought at moments that Rossiter was aiming at the Dostoevskian, but the impression flickered out, and anyway it couldn't have worked in this play.

Nor is it only Leone's formidableity that is lost. For if he is already an underdog in Act I, what happens to the joke in Act II, when the tyrannical Leone, in chef's cap, is found humbly beating eggs, in obedience to his cook-valet's rules?

The only chance left to Rossiter is pathos, and this he seizes with some effect. He very nearly brings off the climactic Act I speech, where Leone tells Ouldo of the totally other person (unknown and unattainable even to her) that is enclosed in Silla. Rossiter gets the tenderness rather finely, but

he does not quite convey Leone's metaphysical wonderment. He succeeds even better in the final duologue with Silla, in Act II, but by this time the play is in ruins. For, to a gallant error, like the casting of Rossiter as Leone, to add a semi-deliberate sabotaging of the part of Silla, seems definitely perverse. To present Silla as a character out of early Noel Coward, not a tragic-comic hysteric but a Harrods shopper with a daff chortle and hardly a care in the world, and to dress her in a cinche hat and 1920s furs to remind you it is a "period" piece (and then ignore the period in most other particulars), is a desperate measure. I intend no reflection on Mel Martin, who plays Silla; the blame lies elsewhere.

As presented at the Haymarket, the only weapons you could associate with Guido, supposedly the second of a hundred duels, are the putter and the No 1 iron. It is easy to carp, and this would be to carp unfairly; for it seems that you are bound to anglicize Italian drama, as you are bound to with French, and as you do not have to with Scandinavian and Russian. I do not know why this should be, and it is a great shame, for it means it is almost a rule that one writes somewhat in adaptations from the Italian or French. Certainly some of the audience write, and the rest suffer. They titter manfully in all the wrong places, as they are invited to do, and at the end applaud with dejection.

The price of success

Carol Rumens

CARYL CHURCHILL

Top Girls
Royal Court Theatre

In this vigorous if untidy parable for Thatcher's Britain, Caryl Churchill begins by attacking the prevalent view that any woman worth her salt is perfectly free to become a Top Girl, like our leader, then rather deftly shifts her argument to class. Neither the "Patriarchy v Women" nor the "Us v Them" theme is, of course, an original one for the modern dramatist; what is distinctive in this play is the linking of the two and the skill with which Churchill manipulates her sparring sisters, Marlene and Joyce, as symbols, while creating entirely credible characters. Their argument in the last scene has all the bleak resonance of cradle-bed rivalry, despite some earlier hints of authorial pamphleteering.

In a sparklingly surreal first scene, the high-flying, nouveau-middle-class Marlene (Gwen Taylor) gives a dinner to celebrate her promotion (above a male rival we never meet) to Managing Director of the Top Girls employment agency. Her guests are a delightfully varied quintet of women from history or myth: Dulle, Griet (Carole Hayman), Lady Mijo, an eighteenth-century Japanese courtesan (Lindsay Duncan), the nineteenth-century transvestite Pope Joan (Selina Cadell), Isabella Bird Blabop (Deborah Findlay) and an excruciatingly patient Griselda (Lesley Manville). The cast does a superb job of characterization, humorous but never merely parodic, and the whole episode becomes almost the verbal equivalent of some wonderfully spiced Mozart operatic finale. Rarely pausing to listen to each other, the guests tell their stories with such unself-pitying verve that the pain and injustice — emerge — almost incidentally, yet in particularly sharp relief.

By contrast, the sketches set in the Top Girls office fall flat. Played by the same performers doubling roles, the three interviewees seem to have been set up as illustrations of How Women Fail. Their complaints may be morally valid, but are dramatically null, and work against the play's own thesis, perfectly plausible in itself, that women even now haven't got it made.

These scenes belong to a different level of reality, more drably literal play. The appearance of the wife of Marlene's male rival in order to proclaim her husband's sense of injury (so devastating, in fact, that it results in a heart attack) is even more overdidactic and ineffective. Fortunately these aberrations are temporary, and dramatic interest is retrieved once Churchill picks up the thread of her narrative concerning Marlene, Joyce and her truculent, slow-witted sixteen-year-old daughter, Angie. Angie saves home visits to bedeviled Auntie Marlene at the agency and declares that she has come to live with her. The chronological story ends with Marlene's firmly realistic comment on the girl's future: "She's not going to make it".

The play, however, goes on with a flash-back to the previous year in which Marlene, on a rare social visit engineered by Angie, confronts Joyce (a fine performance by the versatile Deborah Findlay) in her dim, rural, council-house kitchen. As in the first scene, inebriation is the process by which the characters are released into eloquence, but in this case the

eloquence is hostile, bristling with hints of past pains and deprivations (Joyce's failed marriage, Marlene's two abortions, a drunken, wife-beating father). In an extraordinarily effective piece of dialogue, the characters seem to "change places before our eyes": Marlene shouts, weeps, pleads for sympathy and it is Joyce who gains stature by rejecting her sister's wheedling attempts at eliciting a compromise. As we learn that Angie is really Marlene's illegitimate child, so Marlene's success is revealed as hollow, subverted. Churchill offers us a Hobbesian version of feminist theory in which men's achievement depends on their exploitation of women, and women's on their exploitation of other women. The dark and desolate force of this retrospectively lends the first scene of celebration a considerable pathos; we have to remind ourselves that in the narrative sequence, the success comes later. Marlene, with all the selfish force inherent in natural evolution, has survived and prospered.

Top Girls is published by Methuen (4 sppk, paperback £1.95, 0 413 51510 9).

Fifty years on: a Palace intruder

The TLS of September 22, 1932, carried the following review of *The Queen's Progress: Nine Palace Plays* by Laurence Housman:

In a series of short plays, extending from the first Privy Council in 1537 to the Diamond Jubilee sixty years later, Mr Housman indicates the development of Queen Victoria's character. "The first place, 'Poor Mamma!' shows the Queen in contact with her uncles and the Duchess, of Kent immediately after her accession, and suggests the rapidity with which she broke free from restrictive influences. *Woman's Proposals* (1839) and *Leading Strings* (1841) bring Prince Albert on the scene, first as a young foreigner to whom Victoria offers her hand, afterwards as a man determined to become something more than his wife's plaything and to win for himself a share in the work of her life. *The Intruder* (1845) tells of the snicker, in one of the drawing-rooms late at night, between a harmless madman, who has broken into the palace, and the Prince, who has come down to see that the candles have been put out and the furniture

covered in accordance with his orders. From this and the following sketch, which introduces King Edward as a youth, Martin Pupper and Disraeli, the conscientious stiffness of the Prince Consort clearly emerges.

The Queen's objection that in Benjamin Constant's painting of her the face was not red nor the ribbon of the garter blue enough, is related with ingenious shrewdness; there is an amusing battle between two determined ladies when audience is granted to a Canon's wife known as the "She-bear of Windsor"; Mr Gladstone hands in his resignation (March, 1894) and Mrs Gladstone is affectionately kissed by the Queen; and on June 20, 1897, the great lady, *Happy and Olorious*, is wheeled out on to the balcony to receive the cheers of the crowd. The dialogue, particularly that in which Disraeli and his Royal mistress discuss at delicious cross-purposes the merit of Martin Tupper — is clear and flowing; the intertwining of etiquette with personal feeling is neatly done; and, though we see the Queen from without, rather than from within, the peculiar quality of her greatness does steadily appear.

New Oxford books: Literature

Gissing: A Life in Books

John Halperin

Writers' lives are rarely as interesting as their books. The life of George Gissing is an exception. In this absorbing new biography, John Halperin draws on unpublished letters, the author's diaries, and other private papers to construct the portrait of a man entrenched in his time, solidly Victorian, yet a precursor of much that was to preoccupy the twentieth century. Illustrated £18.50

The Sporting World of R.S. Surtees

John Welcome

'Surtees is one of our best comic writers, enjoyable even by those of us who are on the side of the foxes, and would never set crupper on one of the horse set unless driven to it. Here is a lively and overdue biography and critical assessment of one of our finest sporting journalists.' *The Times*. Illustrated £9.95

Pea Soup

Christopher Reid

Readers of Christopher Reid's *Arcadia* may detect a new, more sombre note in this new collection, and yet the comic spirit and enjoyment of metaphor still prevail. The opening poems dwell on domestic themes, and are followed by pieces which explore more exotic territory. The book ends with a handful of love poems addressed to the poet's wife. Paperback £4.50

Minute by Glass

Anne Stevenson

At the heart of this book is a long poem conceived when Anne Stevenson revisited the Great Mountains of Vermont, known to her since childhood, leaving behind the Black Mountains of South Wales, where she was living at the time. 'Green Mountain, Black Mountain', springing from the correspondence of physical and spiritual landscape that has returned as a source of impetus in her work, grew into an elegy for her parents. It also gives a new perspective to her own expatriate existence and to the work that makes up the rest of the collection. Paperback £4.50 7 October

Joseph Hall

A Study in Satire and Meditation
Richard A. McCabe

Bishop Joseph Hall (1574-1633) was known not only for his satirical and controversial works, but also for his poems, meditations, devotional works, and autobiographical tracts. Richard McCabe shows how the meditative and satirical strains in his thought were complementary, and reassesses Hall's status as a creative artist and a literary innovator. £27.50

Oxford University Press

to the editor

The OED

Sir, - Roy Harris's review of Volume 3 of the *Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary* (September 3) is a model of penetrating and discriminating thought for which the discipline of lexicography and the broader discipline of linguistics are the better. In his last ten paragraphs, however, his just appreciation of the insights yielded by the structural study of language leads him to make dismissive statements about historical lexicography, which in me seem seriously misleading in principle.

This part of Harris's review is in my opinion misleading chiefly because it does not take sufficiently into account one universally observable fact about language: in any language community whose language continues to exist and be recorded through an appreciable period of time, the linguistically more conservative and more innovative members (roughly speaking, the older and the younger members) of the language community, year by year, decade by decade, century by century, not in their daily lives on the assumption that they are speakers of the same language (with all due contempt for the vagaries which each lot perceives in the other lot's usage patterns) and yet imperceptibly the language changes, even to the point where its present users are not able to understand its earlier or earliest recorded forms, and sometimes not even able to understand each other. (Consider the Romance languages as divergent end-products of the "imperceptible" change of spoken Latin through time. This statement is neither so ethnocentric nor so simplistic as it may sound. It is not ethnocentric, for it remains valid through vicissitudes like immigration, emigration, conquest, subjection to conquest, and dominant influence of another language community's culture, all of which have affected the English language (for example) during its centuries of existence. Nor is it simplistic, because it means that a language does not have a perfectly identical structure for all its contemporaneous users, and this in turn means that language structure, however scrupulously examined as existing at a given time, is not a stable end abiding system, but itself participates in the dynamics of language change.

To a degree, Harris is right to question, and in effect deny, that "when Shakespeare's contemporaries used the word *happy* they were using the same word as we still use nowadays". Admittedly the "continuous

existence" of a word is not "independent" nor "physical" like that of a tree, building, rock stratum, or biological species, but depends on its repetition by user after user through time. Yet if "continuous existence" of words is to this degree a fiction, it is a procedurally useful fiction, and the primarily opposed concept that "a language has a structure at a given time" is also a fiction, and one that is best defended on the same grounds, that it is procedurally useful. I do not say that the last words between quotation marks in the previous sentence are Harris's tacit assumption, for there are many statements in his review which show that they are not, for instance when he speaks of "the very complex social and situational diversification of English". But then, neither did Murray, Bradley, Craigie and Onions, and neither does Burchfield, proceed on the tacit assumption that language exists independently of humankind as rock strata do. In fact a large part of the procedural usefulness of both the historical fiction and the structuralist fiction lies in the insights that workers in each sub-discipline can furnish to workers in the other. When structural linguists are ready to make "a serious start" on treating the recording of English vocabulary as part of the systematic analysis of... structures of communication", let us hope they do not neglect to mine the Murray-Bradley-Craigie-Onions Dictionary and its Croigie-Onions and Burchfield Supplements.

CHARLES R. SLEETH.
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PLR

Sir, - The rhetoric of Godfrey Carter's diatribe about PLR (Letters, September 17) is extraordinarily ill-informed.

This gentleman lawyer seems to be under the impression that PLR was pupped as the result of a mass impulse (as he terms them) - with "political-historical personages of greater or lesser eminence in both Houses of Parliament" as their sponsors. The facts are different.

It is certainly true that Brigid Brophy and Maureen Duffy - of each of whom it might be said "That's no lady, that's a novelist" - worked indolently for PLR, but of the five original members of Writers' Action Group, two were men - or, as Godfrey Carter would probably prefer, gentlemen: Michael Levey and myself.

For decades before the formation of Writers' Action Group by us, writers had been crusading for PLR. Among them, A. P. Herbert, John Brophy, Michael Holroyd and Victor Bonham-Carter at once come to mind. For decades the Performing Right Society had been collecting fees on behalf of composers.

When Godfrey Carter was drafting his Bill, he was apparently unaware that PLR was already in existence in a number of countries. West German PLR payments have already reached English authors, though English ones have not.

Mr. Carter puts forward the odd notion that if, after reading five pages of a book, a library-borrower puts it aside, it should not count as "a day in the hand" for its author. On the same principle, if, after five hours, he decided that he did not wish to remain in a holiday cottage which he had rented, would he expect to be let off the payment agreed?

As the drafter of the Bill in question, Godfrey Carter might have been better advised - like a cook whose preparation of meals-on-wheels results in widespread food-poisoning - to keep quiet about it. He concludes his letter "Quite clever, really."

FRANCIS KING.
19 Gordon Place, London W8.

Copyright

Sir, - In their article "Copyrights and wrongs: D. H. Lawrence" (September 3), Michael Holroyd and Sandra Jobson revive by implication the ancient slender that my father, John Middleton Murry, and Frieda Lawrence between them "cooked".

Lawrence's lost will. The facts are as follows. In 1914 Lawrence, Frieda, Katharine Mansfield and my father were staying in Buckinghamshire. My father and Lawrence were both expecting to serve in the War. They decided to make their wills and the documents were executed in identical language, both men sitting at opposite sides of the same table. Lawrence left his entire estate to Frieda, my father left his to Katharine. Each couple then witnessed the other's will. Lawrence believed that this will was still valid and in existence because he asked about it three days before his death in 1930.

Lord Merrivale heard the case (for revoking the letters of administration originally granted jointly to Frieda and Lawrence's brother George) in the Probate Court on November 2, 1932. He pronounced in favour of the will of 1914 and granted to Frieda new letters of administration.

with the will attached. He also commented that the terms of the settlement - £500 each for Lawrence's brother and two sisters - were generous.

My father's evidence in court amounted to a recital under oath of the facts which I have given here.

COLIN MIDDLETON MURRY.
Landscott, Lower Street, Dittisham, nr Dartmouth, Devon.

Sir, - The fate of the Auden copyrights is not quite what Michael Holroyd and Sandra Jobson describe in their article "Copyrights and wrongs: D. H. Lawrence" (September 3). Auden did, as they report, leave his copyrights to his friend Chester Kallman. When Kallman died sixteen months later, he had not written a new will to replace an old one which he had bequeathed everything to Auden. His estate therefore passed to his nearest surviving relation, his father, Dr. Edward Kallman.

Friends of Dr. Kallman will be relieved to learn that Mr. Holroyd and Ms. Jobson's report of his death is not supported by the evidence. He is as witty and vigorous as ever, and he looks forward to celebrating his ninety-first birthday in a few months' time.

EDWARD MENDELSON.
Department of English and Comparative Literature, Columbia University, New York, NY 10027.

Sir, - Michael Holroyd and Sandra Jobson (September 3) having thought fit to involve me in the D. H. Lawrence copyright issue, may I for what it is worth state my position in my own terms?

Several months ago and without prior warning, unconcerned with local meal times as with the mystery of the spelling of my name, Mrs. Jobson interrupted my lunch with a long telephone call and talked at length on this subject, openly inviting a protest on my part on the copyright question. Needless to say I would have appreciated the courtesy of a draft for approval of the statements attributed to me.

I have every sympathy with the aims of Cambridge University Press in trying to establish a definitive text of Lawrence's writings and I fully appreciate the magnitude and pitfalls of the task. My main fear indeed is that the immense complexity of showing in a single volume, eg. the two versions of *The Plumed Serpent*, may defeat the most ingenious editors and printers. The work done by CUP on Lawrence's *Letters* so far is invaluable in that it is as nearly complete as can be, and that for the first

time the correspondence can be read in time sequence.

Some novels, such as *The Girl or The White Peacock*, present limited editorial problems. In no case can the renewal of the copyright be justified by the necessity of restoring the text to its original form or even the restoration of cuts or emendations made by Lawrence to satisfy the prudery or caprice of his publisher. *Women in Love*, with its two typescripts and two or three "first" editions, and *The Plumed Serpent* as well as *La Chatterley's Lover*, raise other problems and nobody can object to newly published substantial passages being copyrighted for the first time.

The question I thought Mrs. Jobson raised with me was that of paying scholars who need to quote Lawrence in academic studies. To this my answer would be:

1. Quote in all cases from authentic first editions;
2. No permission from Messrs. Penguin will be required, the copyright in those editions having lapsed;
3. If relevant to the particular subject treated, quote under the "usage" rule from the texts now or in future made available by Cambridge University Press or any other edition;
4. If these quotations are necessary, ask for permission in the usual way.

While nobody will quarrel with Gerald Piggott's anxiety to protect the interests of the Weasley-Ramsey inheritors, and incidentally his own, I feel sure that he would not unreasonably withhold permission for scholarly use of the newly published texts. I have always found him and his father reasonable in this respect.

I hope my many friends now doing Lawrence's works will be rewarded for their efforts and scholarship. But does their work justify a fifty years' prolongation of copyright for the texts now out of copyright? How are the interests of the common reader to be protected? Many will be grateful to Michael Holroyd and Sandra Jobson for raising the question. In my experience some Lawrence manuscripts, such as that of *Soas and Lovers* at Berkeley, were not too long withheld even from the night, let alone the use, of scholars for copyright, ie. comments, reasons, unworthy of a seat of high learning. The new Cambridge edition should make research easier, not more difficult or onerous.

EMILE DELAVENAY.
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Author, Author

Competition No 89

Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than October 15. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or failing that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 89" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on October 22.

1. All shod with steel.
We kissed along the polished ice in games of Confederacy.

2. O'er crackling ice, o'er gulphs profound,
With nimble glide the skaters play.
O'er treacherous pleadsurs flow'ry ground
Thus lightly skim, and haste away.

3. All the time they seemed to be skating onathomless depths of air, so blue the ice had become; and so

glassy smooth was it that they sped quicker, and quicker to the city wall, the white gulls circling about and cutting in the air with their wings the very same sweeps that they cut on the ice with their skates.

Wlaaer; Martin O'Connell
Answers:

1. She lifted the lobster clear of the table. It had about thirty seconds to live.
Well, thought Belacqua, it's a quick death, God help us all.
It is not.
Samuel Beckett, "Dante and the Lobster".

2. ... the film returned to its place, the pulse fluttered - stopped - went on - throbbled - stopped again - moved - stopped - shall I go?
No.
Laurence Sterne, *Tristram Shandy*, VI, 10.

3. "Not about a motor-cycle?"
"No."
"Ooe with overhead valves and dynamo for light? Or with rear handle-bars?"
"No."
Flann O'Brien, *The Irishman's Boy*.

'Edmund Ironside'

Sir, - I'm grateful for the interest shown in my "Edmund Ironside" article (August 13). May I first mention a few corrigenda? Col 3, line 12, read "such" for "other"; col 5, line 31, "honours" for "humours"; line 10 from the end, before "can" insert "was owned by Shakespeare, share writings on good evidence..." I'd welcome further comments and criticisms to help with the Ironside edition I'm preparing, for publication by Junction Books.

Predictably, the TLS post was a mixed bag. Some saw interest, excellent evidence, even fundamental importance; others only ignorance and error. Time may tell; it has taken the *Ironside* fragment over a century to attain its present grudging and challenged acceptance. Meanwhile I'm grateful to Robert F. Fleissner (September 3) for his measure of support, though some of his comments confirm my fear that I tried to pack too much into a short piece. On his factual question, I've sent him a select bibliography of suggestions that the 1589 *Hamlet* may well have been Shakespeare's own; its most recent item is Nigel Alexander's *Macmillan edition* of 1973 (pp 14-15).

Paul Xuereb (September 3): By the "classical" Hecuba I meant the Queen of Troy, at its fall. In *Ironside* (line 1481) she "ran mad for sorrow", unable to express her grief by weeping. In *Titus* too she "ran mad for sorrow" (IV.2.1); the tongueless Latinus has just entered running. In *Hamlet*, Hecuba runs up and down in Troy. Xuereb's feeling that this running image may derive from the post-Troy ex-queen character's words in the static set-piece play of *The Trojan Women* seems to rest solely on his own word "presumably". This is not to deny, though, that there is much identifiable Seneca in both *Titus* and *Ironside*, just as (Nashe suggests) in the early *Hamlet*, and so one might expect if the same hand wrote all three, c. 1589.

MacD. P. Jackson (September 10): I was encouraged by his view in earlier correspondence that *Ironside* may possibly be early Shakespeare. But I think he seriously undervalues the strength of Kenneth Muir's earlier arguments for the same view of *Edmund III*, which has now I believe been confirmed by Elliot Slater's recent thesis as very probably from Shakespeare's hand throughout. I was particularly sorry to lack space for that topic, because any careful reader can identify the many striking affinities between *Edmund III* and *Ironside*. It is disappointing that Slater's supervisor, of all people, has failed to draw the obvious inference.

I fear that Richard Proudfoot's wish to refute (September 17) has run away with him, and that it is he who is "mistaken on all counts". He confuses the Archbishop of Canterbury with the Bishop of London. He claims that Eleanor Boswell "showed in her introduction that the [*Ironside*] manuscript must be a scribal copy". But she didn't; she just said it was (1927, p vi). Here the unhappy history of these studies repeats itself: groundless assertion is announced as ascertained fact. Even so showed, ie by actual argument, that it is not a scribal copy (1954, pp 57-59 to which I have plenty to add). Next "the hand shows none of the characteristics of the authentic signatures of Shakespeare or of the celebrated Hand D"; pages in *The Book of Sir Thomas More*. But it does; Everett specifies thirty-five of them (ibid, pp 102-12, and again I can add others). "Nor does Sams even refer to the exhaustive descriptive analysis of that hand by Sir E. Maude Thompson". But I do, by citing his 1916 book on the topic. "Canute's laws are hardly the 'chief contents' or 'Archaeologia'"; but they are; in a book of regal statutes, Canute's preface is prominent. Furthermore, it is indeed that source, and not Holmshank that links mutilation with lasting infamy; I'm obliged for that point. "Holmshank's *Chronicle of England* (1587) supplies all the history to be

found in the play". But it doesn't; Grafton is also a source (and why not 1577?). "It is hard to resist the thought that *Ironside* may be indebted to *Richard II*". But "thought" just begs the question, which is not whether to resist it but how to justify it. The nearest approach to that is the curious notion that 1595-99 seem likelier limits for *Ironside* than 1587-88 because it "recalls another history play of unknown authorship and disputed date".

Now let's consult the authorities. Not only Evaritt but Hart (1942) gives 1587 as a possible limit for *Ironside*, while Boas (1923), Dodds (1924) and Ribner (1957) all argue for a date of c. 1590. The evidence of diction and vocabulary, carefully checked by hundreds of OED citations, points clearly to the later 1580s. On what verifiable factual grounds does Richard Proudfoot base his conjectured 1595-99?

ERIC SAMS.
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'Accents of English'

Sir, - I'm surprised that Robert Burchfield in his review (August 20) of J. C. Wells's *Accents of English* should say that "R insertion" (near us, far away) leads to the intrusive *r* of *awhirlinspring*.

Surely those of us (especially Scots and Welsh) who go in for "R insertion" are the ones who *don't* employ the intrusive *r*. Conversely, Southern Englishmen who use the intrusive *r* "all the time can't manage 'R insertion' at all: instead of the *r* in *near us* they use a kind of glottal stop.

ELWYN EVANS.
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Milton in Russia

Sir, - "Giving *Paradise Lost* to the peasants" is the title of Henry Gifford's review of a recent Soviet anthology of English verse (August 13). If irony was intended it is based on Gifford's own error in associating Maurice Baring with a literary anachronism, this distinguished English authority on Russia would never have made it. It is perfectly true, of course, that when Baring visited that country he was astonished to find "Paradise Lost" translated into simple prose [being] sold in cheap editions, with coloured pictures, all over Russia, and greedily read by the peasants..." Baring reported this in his *Literary Landmarks in Russian Literature* (1910), and the story has since become part of the lore about Milton in Russia. Yet your reviewer imports a gloss of his own to the Baring quotation by referring to "Books I-III by Patrov in 1777".

Any reader of the peasants' reading your review may wonder why these primitive beings were reduced under the Tsarist regime to reading so ancient a translation. Worse, did they find *Paradise Lost* such hard going that they abandoned it with Book III? Maurice Baring argued that "very great art" (he cites Homer, Shakespeare, Dante, Beethoven and Mozart next to Milton) appeals to all classes of society, "to the specialist and to the most uncultivated ignorant". The Russian career of *Paradise Lost* would suggest that he was right, even though "Patrov's partial translation of 1777 has relatively little to do with it."

His translation, probably begun five years earlier in England (while Estrov was conceiving with the bigamous Duchess of Kingston), has no "coloured pictures", and it is never "sold in cheap editions". In fact, it was only published once, the reason being that readers preferred the full translation of Milton's epic, of which several appeared soon after. Indeed,

Paradise Lost was so well received by Russians even before the appearance of these published editions that many manuscript copies of the earliest translation (1745) were made, and have been found as far apart as Archangel, Lithuania and the Ukraine. By the time of Pushkin (who deeply admired Milton) the prose editions were so popular that a reviewer wondered whether "Englishmen will believe that the Russian translation... of their great countryman's *Paradise Lost* had become with us a book of the common people".

By the beginning of the twentieth century several dozen more editions of *Paradise Lost* and *Paradise Regained* had been published, and the "coloured pictures" to which Baring and Gifford refer were used by enterprising publishers to boost sales with the introduction of chromolithography in the 1890s. Between 1890 and the First World War thirty-one prose translations and editions saw the light of day. In this figure I do not include the verse translations (which peasants clearly did not favour). Were Milton's epics read as widely in any other foreign country?

Nor was this "peasant" interest confined to Milton's poems. As the London *Daily News* noted in 1908, with the revolution's defeat "translations of the *Aeneid* made their appearance, and hawkers sold them for a few kopecks to defy the censors". I have seen four such editions. I assume that Baring did not follow up what he must have known about Milton's vast popularity in Russia simply because he did not really like him. His felicitous "Diary of Mary, Mrs John Milton" anticipates Robert Graves by taking the side of the poet's runaway wife, and ridiculing Milton's politics and character.

In conclusion, dare I hope that Henry Gifford is not responsible for the title of his review? If tone would have irritated the distinguished editors of the anthology under discussion, I was privileged to meet one of them, Academioid M. P. Alekseyev, the memory of whose extraordinary erudition and passion for literature (for English poetry in particular) I shall always treasure. In one of our last encounters he showed me one of the more modern verse translations (1911) of *Paradise Lost* by the zoologist N. A. Khokhlovsky, which is the translation through which the young Aleksyev (then a music critic) first became familiar with Milton. The recent 1976 Soviet anthology of Milton's work appeared

in an edition of over 300,000 copies. A new Russian edition of *Paradise Lost*, also huge, is scheduled to appear this year. Are peasants, perhaps, still at it?

VALENTIN BOSS.
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Tatars and the Crimea

Sir, - Ernest Gellner's observation, in his review of Elisabeth Young-Bruehl's *Haanah Aremid* (August 6), that the Crimea is politically Russian is almost thirty years out of date. In 1945, a year after the native Tatars were deported to Central Asia for alleged collaboration with the Nazis, the Crimean Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic (which had been founded in 1921) was indeed transformed into an *oblast* of the Russian Republic, with which it was not contiguous. In 1954, however, on the 300th anniversary of the "reunification of Ukraine with Russia", the Crimea was incorporated into the Ukrainian Republic, where it has remained ever since.

The Tatars were not of course consulted about either change. Although they were partially exonerated of the wartime charges in 1967, the 300,000 Tatars now living in Central Asian exile (the figure is an estimate; the Crimean Tatars are not granted recognition as a separate nationality in Soviet statistics) have been prevented, often by armed force, as the *Chocicle of Current Events* has reported, from returning to their homeland, and all traces of their history in the Crimea have been eradicated. It is true that Russian settlers, who now constitute the bulk of the population, hold sway linguistically and culturally, but this is not to say that the Crimea is an administrative unit of the Russian Republic.

MARCO CARYNNYK.
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'In the Active Voice'

Sir, - Though it is good to see that your reviewers maintain high standards, one can only wonder whether the intellectual giants of the past would have escaped his strictures were they asked to meet criteria similar to those Stuart Sutherland

(August 13) imposes on Mary Douglas's *In the Active Voice*. To wit: "Her [his] repeated pleas for taking account of human intentions [sexual-ity] become a little tiresome." Poor Freud. "Here, as elsewhere, she [he] seems more interested in putting forward highly speculative ideas than in demonstrating their validity." Poor Einstein was only a theorist and not an experimenter. Instead of providing "empirical evidence," showing that the elements of her theory cohere, Sutherland writes, Mary Douglas, "gives us to apply her analysis to a number of different areas of life including attitudes to nature, foreigners, cookery, medicine, youth, the past, death, physical handicap and punishment." Alas, poor Darwin, he and his followers, though they are rich in examples, have yet to demonstrate the validity of natural selection.

There are other commonly used tests of grand theories - intellectual power, range of applicability, encouragement of research programmes, all compared to existing alternatives - but, if they were applied, the danger exists they might be passed.

AARON WILDAVSKY.
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Fiction and Actuality

Sir, - Being rather behind in my reading, I have just come across Arthur Marshall's remark (October 16, 1981) that P. G. Wodehouse, in an early story, created two characters named Burgess and Macdon. Mr Marshall asks when it was that discovered this. I don't know the answer to that, but I have discovered a "similarly strange anticipation" in Arnold Bennett's *Clayhanger*, which contains characters named Ford, Cartor and Nixon. Ford and Cartor are partners in a manufacturing concern, and Nixon is the name of the Clayhangers' housekeeper. I do not remember these being Reagan, but there is a character named Udell (another partner in the manufacturing concern), and perhaps this bodes well for the Congressman from Arizona for 1984.

SHELDON OOLDFARB.
4-277 Arbutnot Street, Winnipeg, Manitoba.

Information, please

Jane Nugeat Burke (c1734-1812), wife of Edmund Burke: whereabouts of correspondence, information on descendants.

Elizabeth R. Lambert.
Department of English, University of Maryland, College Park, Maryland 20742.

Charles Ricketts and Charles Shannon: letters or personal reminiscences; for a biography.

Paul Delaney.
36A Beaumont Road, London W4.

W. B. Yeats: for an authorized edition of the manuscripts of Yeats's poetry of the 1880s and 1890s (including the verse dramas of the 1880s), whereabouts of pertinent manuscripts other than those in the National Library of Ireland, Trinity College Library, New York Public Library, and in the collections of Miss Anne Yeats and Senator Michael Yeats.

George Borarslein.
Department of English, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor 48109.

Prile Andes, also known as *Max Allan* (1841-1910): German novelist; location (in university or public library) of two works, *Gedächtnis und Heldentum* (1909); for a sketch of Andersen's life and work.

Rudolf Koester.
Department of Foreign Languages, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, Nevada 89154.

Bustocking Circle: unpublished letters etc sought for a book about Elizabeth Carter, Hester Chenevix, Elizabeth Montagu, the second Duchess of Portland, Catherine Talbot, Elizabeth Vesey, their friends and associates.

S. H. Myers.
20 Westbourne Terrace, London W2 3UP.

Rosie Boote: Oale Theatre actress (1885-1901); later married to J. H. Marwood; whereabouts of personal documentary material and personal reminiscences sought by family researcher.

Olivia Varma.
80 Onslow Gardens, London SW7.

Mary Edith Durham (1863-1944): Balkan traveller, writer and artist; letters and reminiscences; for a biography.

G. Grant.
26 Gwydir Street, Cambridge.

David Rorie (1867-1946), author of "The Lum. Hat Wanlin" "the Croon"; any information on published and unpublished writings, etc for a new edition of his poetry and prose.

William Donaldson.
10 Orchard Place, Aberdeen.

Junger literary criticism: titles of all books and articles in which concepts derived from the psychology of G. Jung have been applied to the interpretation of literary texts; for a comprehensive survey and annotated critical bibliography.

Jos van Mours.
Department of English, University of Groningen, Grote Kruisstraat 2/1, 9712 TS Groningen, The Netherlands.

Nancy Milford: personal reminiscences, papers etc sought; for a biography.

Selina Hastings.
9 Rothwell Street, London NW1, EYH.

Olivia Manning: whereabouts of manuscripts of short stories, letters; for a critical biography.

Mary Salmon.
7 Watermill Grove, Old Bawa, Talaght, Co Dublin, Ireland.

Lord Boyle of Handsworth: personal reminiscences, papers etc sought; for a biography.

Ronald Porter.
69B Keworth Avenue, London SW19 7LP.

Among this week's contributors

ROSEMARY ASHTON's *The German Idea: Four English Writers and the Reception of English Thought 1800-1860* was published in 1980.

PAUL K. BELL was until recently a regular reviewer of fiction for *Commentary*.

BRIAN BOND's most recent book is *British Military Policy between the Two World Wars*, 1980.

JOHN CANNON's edition of *The Letters of Junius* was published in 1978.

BARRY CUMIFF's books include *Hangulbury Head*, 1978.

C. J. CULLEN is a lecturer in Anthropology at the London School of Economics. His *The Native Today* was published in 1976.

P. N. FURBER's books include *Z. M. Forster: A Life*, 1977, and 1978.

ROBERT GARRETT's collections of poems include *West of Eden*, 1975.

HELEN GIBSON's *Pasternak: a Critical Study* was published in 1977.

MICHAEL HOWARD is Regius Professor of Modern History at the University of Oxford.

SIR ROMANO LEACH's books include *Culture and Communication*, 1976.

GRAVEL LINDOP is a lecturer in English at the University of Manchester.

PIERS MACKERY's *The Coward of Milden: the Affair of Lord George Sackville* was published in 1979.

CYRIL MANOO's books include *Byzantium*, 1980.

KENNETH O. MORGAN's most recent book is *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1980*, 1981.

S. J. NEWMAN is a lecturer in English at the University of Liverpool.

M. P. PEKOTZ is a Nobel Laureate in Chemistry. He was the founder and for seventeen years the Chairman of MRC Laboratory of Molecular Biology in Cambridge.

R. P. PIERCE's most recent book is *Path to the American Past*, 1980.

ROBIN ROBBINS edited the *Oxford English Text of Sir Thomas Browne's Pseudodoxia Epidemica*.</

Melodramas for soprano

Michael Tanner

WILLIAM ASHBROOK

Donizetti and his Operas

744pp. Cambridge University Press.
£25.
0 521 23526 X

While it is impossible to take the operas of Donizetti entirely seriously, they and their recent revival do raise entirely serious questions. In her famous and very helpful article "Notes on 'Camp'", Susan Sontag places Bellini's operas among the "canon of camp", but she got her bel canto composer wrong. Bellini's finest works can and should be taken as seriously as they are intended, and there is a strong case for saying that *Norma* is the greatest of Italian operas. It is a work of nobility and high seriousness, which moves inevitably towards a wholly convincing tragic denouement; and, thanks to the genius of Maria Callas, we now know that no allowances have to be made for it.

It was Callas who was also responsible for the major re-entry of Donizetti into the operatic repertoire — only *Lucia di Lammermoor*, *Don Pasquale* and *L'Elisir d'Amore*, of the many operas in his unbelievably huge output, had always maintained their place. She was only actively involved in the revival of two of them, but the decisive event was the production of *Anna Bolena* at La Scala in 1957. Because it is so powerful a work when judiciously pruned of, among other things, its Overture, and because it had been neglected for so long, it seemed reasonable to expect that many of Donizetti's other works would prove to be as fine. In fact none of them has, but with sixty-five in seventy to explore the indeterminacy comes from Donizetti's extensive reworkings of many of his scores, such as *Polliuolo* into *Les Martyrs*, which may or may not be counted as two operas) who can tell whether another near-masterpiece will emerge? Hence one reason for the annual disinterment of three or four further works, the establishment of a Donizetti Society in London with a book-length journal which appears every two years or so, the concert performances of Opere Rara followed often by recordings, the enormous proliferation of "private" or "premier" recordings of Italian performances, and so on.

Nevertheless, even at his finest, generous allowances must be made for Donizetti — with the exception of his comedies. The element of the absurd is always a little too close to be unembarrassing, even to audiences trained in the varied preposterousness of opera. The same goes for the vast majority of Verdi's output, much of it scarcely distinguishable from Donizetti. But at the moment Verdi can do no wrong, so that even inmates like *Aida* have to be taken with a straight face. No doubt that is partly due to the undoubted greatness of his last works, which are used to browbeat into submission doubters about the larger part of his work.

Of course the people who travel huge distances to "collect" performances of *Attila* or *Rudenz* or *Polliuolo* at La Fenice or in Rome take them seriously, and William Ashbrook has produced a book which, admirable as it is, will bore them while they say that it is indispensable. But who are these people? They constitute a strikingly different audience from those for whom the operas were originally intended: the Italian-going public — drawn from all classes of the first half of the nineteenth century. They are the international set of opera queens, who find Mozart inefficently spectacular vocally and Wagner, naturally, a bore, and whose primary joy is to worship and applaud the soprano who are the *reign of terror* of most of Donizetti's melodramas. Callas, supremely, but also her great successor, Leyla Gencer, and the acclaimed Sutherland, Sills, Caballé and Ricciarelli — for many male homosexuals is a phenomenon as undeniable as it is officially ignored. These divas fascinate the same people who maintain a cult of Garbo and Bette Davis. But the more glamorous ambience in which their performances are set, the more they are seen as

What draws their special audiences, as opposed to regular opera-goers, is that they are emphatically melodrama, not tragedy, where melodrama can be defined as the camp relation of tragedy. The subjects of both are often identical, but as the Marschallin puts it in *Der Rosenkavalier*, "in dem 'Wie' du liegst der ganze Unterschied". A mad heroine who voices her insanity in a prolonged duet, or duet, with a flute, cannot be taken wholly in earnest, even if she sings with the extraordinary curdled pathos of Callas.

It is an essential feature of Donizetti's works that they draw attention to the virtuosity of their performers, and though that by itself would not constitute camp, if the difficulty of what is being sung is foremost in the listener's mind, when the subject — insanity, rage, vengeance, enormously protracted death — is so intensely serious, the result undeniably will be camp. That is why, conversely, Donizetti's comedies are not camp; it is natural for youthful high spirits, bluntness and mockery to express themselves, operatically, in trills, successions of scales and roulades, and so it seems perfectly appropriate and therefore unaffected. One might say that, since operatic singing almost always tends towards the strenuously athletic, all opera tends towards the condition of camp, though the greatest operas certainly transcend it.

The question remains as to why, in Donizetti, it should be the soprano who is so evidently put through her paces; and the answer no doubt partly lies in the early Romantic sensibility, with its stress on tormented and shockingly maltreated women, who may be expected to express themselves more acrobatically than stoically suffering men (the most serious music in *Lucia* is for Edgardo, after Lucia herself has left the scene). The further question of why opera queens are so turned on by these queens of the operatic stage could only be answered fully by some as yet (so far as I am aware) totally unresearched depth psychology. If, as has sometimes been suggested, male homosexuals are in some way afraid of women, then the beginnings of an answer may be that figures such as Callas, who incarnate so perfectly a certain ideal of femininity, offer many of the gratifications without any of the envisaged threats of womanhood. They offer tenderness, excitement, sensuality, even scorn and vehemence, but without any requirement of an active response. The ideal of femininity presented is no doubt a dated one, offensive to many contemporary sensibilities. But it is comprehensible that it should be welcomed and celebrated.

These speculations are made in no hostile spirit towards Donizetti, his interpreters, or his and their admirers. It is, on the other hand, perfectly understandable that such matters should find no place in William Ashbrook's very large book. He has provided what is best seen as a work of reference; it scarcely replaces, though in many ways it improves upon, the critical biography which he produced in 1965, and which can much more easily be read straight through. The other large book on Donizetti in English, by Herbert Weinstock, can safely be ignored. The new book neglects altogether Donizetti's non-operatic works, which amount to a good deal, though not enough for a further book; so that it might have been worth while to discuss the considerable number of far from negligible piano pieces, both for two and four hands, the chamber works, the songs and cantatas, and especially the very moving and powerful Requiem in memory of Bellini, of which there is an admirable, pirate recording under the arch-Donizettian Giampaolo Guazzoni (the piano music has been recorded completely by RCA).

The structure of Ashbrook's book is unfortunately necessitated by a deal of repetition. The 200-odd pages (not Donizetti's life, but since it is rather short — he became syphilitically insane at the age of forty-eight — the account of it naturally consists largely of the composition of his operas, referring to other things in a fair amount of detail in order to explain why, at the best of concerted singers,

exigent impressions, varying national and even regional tastes, and the scarcely credible rigours of censorship. Donizetti was obliged to cast them in the form he did. Part Two, more than 300 pages, is the valuable core of the book, dealing conscientiously with all of the operas, superbly printed in vocal score, and including a welcome number of value-judgments, which become increasingly and interestingly more forceful, and in some cases fait, as the accounts proceed. Donizetti's last opera, *Don Sébastien*, receives twenty-two pages of treatment, and is pronounced his masterpiece. It has been oddly neglected, revived only in its Italian

version and in mutilated form for the Maggio Musicale in 1955 under Giulini (there is a pirated recording available). Then follow fifty pages in tiny print of plot summaries of all the operas, whether finished or not, about which I feel exactly as I do about the synopses which precede opera broadcasts on Radio Three: superfluous for those who already know the works, useless for those who don't (Have we got to Aurelio's nightmare yet?). There is a hefty documentation and the by now typically infuriating section of notes (over 100 pages) which range from simple page-references to extended items of further information, with no means of knowing, from the main text, which it will be.

For someone who has devoted an amount of energy to his subject, Ashbrook is remarkably modest in his estimates of Donizetti's oeuvre. He diligently lists the flaws in each work, and rarely makes big claims. The moments of special pleading are all the more obtrusive. Seeking to defend Donizetti against one apparent common charge, he writes: "The *Anna Bolena*, Tasso and *Le due Donzelle* testify to a greater consistency in Donizetti's style than has usually been granted". Given that the four works cited are so strikingly different in subject-matter, it might be felt that rather than being congratulatory the consistency, Donizetti should be rebuked for his inflexibility and generalized idiom. Again, because it is the subject of the artist as hero, Ashbrook writes that it is "in the same category, as operas such as *Benvenuto Cellini* and *Die Meistersinger*" — a grotesque judgment encapsulated in one brief clause. And in his discussion of *Polliuolo* and its French re-working *Les Martyrs*, Ashbrook concludes that the former will appeal more to "a adherent of the values of Romantic melodrama", while "a mystic will find *Les Martyrs* more to his taste". I would be profoundly suspicious of a mystic at least on duty, who found any of Donizetti to his taste.

More generally, I would have welcomed a final chapter in which Ashbrook attempted an overview of Donizetti's oeuvre, an indication of his place in the history of opera, and especially a more detailed account of the differences between him and the still easily confused, though in reality radically different, genius of Verdi. Essentially they are no more alike than Haydn and Mozart. On the other hand, the extreme closeness of much of Verdi's work to Donizetti might have been stressed, to the benefit of the latter; and more should have been said about the differences between Rossini's dazzling and heady comedies and Donizetti's comparative warmth. None the less, the book is clearly destined to be the classic work on its subject, almost worthy, as it is, to stand beside Julian Budden's three volumes on Verdi.

Admirers of operatic superstars may wish to demonstrate their savoir-faire by answering the more trivial of the questions in James Canner's *The Operatic Quiz Book* (125pp. Robson Books, £5.95, 0 86051 174 X). For instance: what great Wagnerian soprano once played the unlikely part of the castrato Farnell in an opera? When you rang the doorbell at *Elisabeth*'s house, what did you hear? What prima donna took curtain calls with a goose under her arm? Or perhaps less easily verifiable, who was the shortest ever Aida? These and 409 other questions are subdivided into sections on Stars, Houses, Composers and Operetta, as well as the necessary miscellaneous section, which includes equally pointed questions.

and part of his popular appeal. What needs to be remembered too, however, is that he was a pioneer of modern music and a champion of young composers from Stravinsky to Shostakovich. He conducted the American concert and stage premieres of *The Rite of Spring*, to Ned Rorem and many others. The list of first performances that he conducted occupies fourteen pages in Preben Opperby's book.

The book is exact in such detail, but Opperby groups his chapters under headings, so that we read a monotonous account of the politics surrounding the leadership succession of the various American orchestras, with which Shostakovich was associated at various points in his career. This might have made amusing reading, but most of the ups and downs of fortune are dismissed in brief telegram-like statements. The Second World War comes and is gone in a



John Sutherland bombarded with daffodils after her performance in the title role of Donizetti's *Lucia di Lammermoor*; the picture, with other rehearsal stills, is included in *The Royal Opera House, Covent Garden by Clive Boursnell* and Colin Thubron, with a foreword by the Prince of Wales, to be published on September 27 (256pp. Hamish Hamilton, £20.00, 0 241 10891 8). The book aims to explore, through essays and pictures, the working life of the Opera House in all its aspects.

Constant shock-waves

Patrick O'Connor

PREBEN OPPERBY

Leopold Stokowski
288pp. Midas Books, £12.50,
0 85936 251 1

Stokowski, you may remember, was the only human being to appear with Mickey Mouse on the screen; his Hollywood career, which also took in an appearance with Deanna Durbin and an over-publicized friendship with Garbo, increased his reputation among music critics as a vulgarizer. The book of surprises on a soprano soloist's face during a concert performance of Britten's *Immolation* scene when he brought in the double-force harp is just one of the hundreds of anecdotes about the

conducting of good taste which was his joy

and part of his popular appeal. What needs to be remembered too, however, is that he was a pioneer of modern music and a champion of young composers from Stravinsky to Shostakovich. He conducted the American concert and stage premieres of *The Rite of Spring*, to Ned Rorem and many others. The list of first performances that he conducted occupies fourteen pages in Preben Opperby's book.

single sentence. "His life was often in danger when the German-bombed trains in which he was trying to escape the country." It comes out as something of a surprise to read that when Stokowski threatened to resign from the Philadelphia Orchestra in 1933 it gave "a shock to the whole musical world". The shock waves from elsewhere that year must have made many other before him tremble.

A chapter of anecdotes about Stokowski's dealings with players and some of his sayings, and another called "Stokowski: the Man" might have been broken up and fitted in to the main point of this book is obviously Opperby's studious collection of information about Stokowski's career and the lists of his performances and gramophone records which will no doubt be of use to future scholars and biographers.

The usurper's chapel

Cyril Mango

CECIL L. STRIKER
The Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii) in Istanbul
131pp. Including 84 black-and-white illustrations. Guildford: Princeton University Press, £26.50.
0 691 03546 6

The determined tourist intent on visiting the lesser Byzantine monuments of Istanbul may have some trouble in finding the Myrelaion (Bodrum Camii), the private church built by the usurper Romanus Lecapenus in about 920. It used to be a conspicuous landmark — a burnt-out shell on a hill in the midst of an overgrown open space. Today, however, it is surrounded by dingy blocks of flats and practically invisible except from the west. More disastrously, nearly the entire structure was refaced with modern brick in 1964-65 to an ill-considered attempt at conservation. What was once a picturesque ruin can now only be described as a mess.

Next to the Myrelaion one can make out the lower portion of an immense fifth-century rotunda that was excavated by the German Archaeological Institute in 1965-66. The rotunda was evidently derelict when Romanus Lecapenus acquired possession of it. He levelled it to a uniform height, turned the interior into a vaulted cistern and built upon it his mansion of which only the foundations have been recovered. The Myrelaion, which was intended to serve as the house chapel, had to be raised to the same height as the mansion and was accordingly provided with a tall substructure of the same dimensions and disposition as the church above it. Eventually the whole complex was turned into a nunnery and several

members of the Lecapenus family were buried in it.

At the same time that the Germans were conducting their excavation of the rotunda, Cecil L. Striker carried out a more modest operation, which was to clear the substructure of the church of some 3.5 m of earth-fill. The findings he made, while not devoid of interest, could adequately have been presented in a ten-page article. They are that the substructure was not originally meant for either ecclesiastical or funerary use; that the church was burnt in about 1200 (most probably in the great fire of 1203) that a mass of debris, including small architectural fragments and bits of ceramic revetment tiles, was later dumped into the substructure to a depth of about 1.5 m. Upon this deposit a brick floor was laid in c. 1300 and the space was used for burials; above one of which was found a fragmentary painting of a deceased woman kneeling in front of the Virgin Mary.

These discoveries represent the original contribution made by Professor Striker to the study of the Myrelaion. The greater part of his slender book is, however, devoted to a somewhat arid discussion of the architecture of the church, illustrated by a set of drawings whose number (thirty-two) strikes me as excessive for a building of small size, standard plan and uncomplicated structural history. He has nothing new to say about the history of the monument or the medieval topography of that part of Constantinople in which the Myrelaion stood. But then it seems that the reading of Greek and Latin sources is not Striker's forte. The one time he ventures to give a Latin quotation (from the sixteenth-century French traveller Pierre Gilles) he commits five errors in one sentence, making the passage completely unintelligible. In view of the fact that not many readers are likely to have Gilles's *De*

topographie Constantinopolis within easy reach, and since the identification of the Bodrum Camii with the Myrelaion rests on this very passage, it may be helpful to quote it correctly:

Supra hortorum Blanchae nuncupatorium, olim portum [not portum] Theodosiacum continentium extremam partem ad ortum solis pertinentem cinctus a [not ad] septentrione cinctus, in quo est templum vulgo nominatum Myreleos, habens intra se cisternam curius camera lateritia [not lateritia] sustinetur columnis marmoreis circiter sexaginta, ubi depravatum olim fuit, quod [not quod] depravate [not depravatum] Sydas appellat horeum.

The sad fate of the Myrelaion naturally prompts one to think about the survival of the Byzantine monuments of Istanbul. The three-star monuments, like St Sophia and the Kariye Camii, receive some, though not always adequate, care and the churches that have been turned into mosques are relatively safe. But what of the rest? To quote but a few examples, the mosaic pavement of the Great Palace is falling to pieces, the nave of the venerable basilica of St Mary Chalcoptreia has been converted into a parking-lot, the marble walls of the city are being progressively demolished, while those of the Blachernae quarter, once so picturesque, have been partly enclosed by a depot for packing-cases. I am not unaware of the immense economic problems that Turkey has to face today nor do I wish to imply that the Turkish Antiquities Service has not had its share of dedicated men and women who have bravely struggled within their limited means to preserve what they could. A concerted effort is, however, urgently required both on the part of the Turkish authorities and of international bodies to save a diminishing heritage.

The rise and fall of Britannia

Barry Cunliffe

JOHN MORRIS

Londinium: London in the Roman Empire
Revised by Sarah Macready
384pp. Weidenfeld and Nicolson, £15.
0 257 78093 X

Roman London has frequently found itself presented to the public in book form, for the very good reason that the archaeological evidence, exposed in building works, is constantly beneath the gaze of a large sector of our population and, as the heritage of our capital city, it has rightly been the subject of extensive (and expensive) campaigns of excavation. The potential richness of the City first became established in the nineteenth century, but the first systematic rescue work was not carried out until, under Mortimer Wheeler's direction in the 1930s, the London Museum appointed a series of young men to record what was being destroyed and where possible to carry out limited rescue excavations.

The devastation of the last war cleared much of the nucleus of the ancient centre, presenting an archaeological problem as exciting as it was frightening. Limited funds and lack of a properly trained staff meant that much was lost to the developers' bulldozers but a great deal of new information was gleaned and the Temple of Mithras showed an excited public that archaeology could be entertaining — it also demonstrated to property developers that, as the destroyers of our heritage, they had a responsibility to help provide for the proper recording of anything of archaeological value that lay in their way.

The post-war experience paved the way for the creation of the Museum of London, the Department of Urban Archaeology, a professional organization charged to rescue what is left of London's below-ground heritage before the present wave of development sweeps away the last vestiges of the past. The success of the

publicized and its work is thorough, as anyone visiting their current excavations at Billingsgate is well able to see.

It is against this background of intense and continuous archaeological activity, punctuated at regular intervals by the appearance of yet another book on Roman London, that John Morris's *Londinium* must be judged. Morris began writing in 1967 and had completed the first draft in the early 1970s, sporadically revising it up to 1975. When he died in 1977 his manuscript was almost complete. Now, five years later, after delicate and sympathetic editing by Sarah Macready, his work has been published. Simply told the story does not augur well for a volume dealing with such a rapidly expanding subject but all the originality of John Morris's brilliant mind is there to endow *Londinium* with a very distinctive quality.

The title is a little misleading. This is not a book primarily about Roman London, but a highly entertaining account of the Roman province of Britannia, seen as an integral part of the Roman world, using some of the relevant evidence from London as illustrative material. The concept is an interesting one and the book must be judged a considerable success. One moment we are dealing with broad themes of Empire-wide importance, the next delving into the minutiae of some scrap of archaeological evidence. The agility of mind of the author and his skill in leading us effortlessly from one level to the other seldom rather than tire the reader.

Like all good archaeological works *Londinium* is divided into three parts. The first, "The Making of London", discusses the conquest of Britain, the conflict of Rome against the barbarians, and Roman attitudes towards administration and urbanization. It leads us through the turmoil of the first century AD to the consolidation of the Flavian Era by which time the structure and government of the province were firmly established. The second part, "Roman London", is rather more

London-centred. We are shown how the city, as the prime seat of government, matured and how its citizens worked, fed and played. Finally, in the third part, "The Survival of London", we are back in a fast-moving story — the story of an Empire thrust on to inevitable destruction by dynamic processes it could not control. Our last vision is of London in the late sixth century emerging once more, this time as an English settlement under King Aethelbert.

The book was planned with great care to present a balanced picture of the Empire in terms of its citizens. There is no dogmatism, nor are there obtrusive value judgments. Yet even to a reader unaware of Morris's strongly held socialist views, it must be apparent that this was a work written by someone who, while caring passionately for the individual, understood the difficulties of those in power and had, if not a respect, at least a sympathy for the State. I do not wish to give the impression that this is a political book — it is not. It is a refreshing account of a great and small events — presented in a way that one believed the politics can properly be learnt only through history.

Morris clearly set out to make interesting one and the same book must be judged a considerable success. One moment we are dealing with broad themes of Empire-wide importance, the next delving into the minutiae of some scrap of archaeological evidence. The agility of mind of the author and his skill in leading us effortlessly from one level to the other seldom rather than tire the reader.

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The exemplary martyr

Henry Gifford

NIKITA STRUVE

Ossip Mandelstam

302pp. Paris: Institut d'études slaves.
120 fr.
2 7204 0176 5

Nadezhda Mandelstam, a critic not easily satisfied, thought very well of an essay which Nikita Struve wrote in 1968 for the *Collected Works* edited by Glib Struve and B. A. Filippov. In it Struve considered three aspects of the poet's achievement: all inter-related: destiny, vision and voice. These ideas he has developed, with Nadezhda's continued interest while she was alive, in the present book. It attempts something as yet unfulfilled by other commentators – a statement about the work as a whole, in support of his view that Mandelstam has exceptional significance, and not for Russian poetry alone. He writes in French, but his clear and detailed exposition throbs with a specifically Russian feeling. Western readers may find themselves not always attuned to it. The case however is impressive, and even through this triple approach makes for some overlap, as Struve acknowledges, the work deserves an important place in the growing literature on Mandelstam.

The notion of a poet's destiny (which governs the first long section) is an uncomfortable one in the Anglo-Saxon world. Even Hardy, from whose writings the term "destiny" is certainly not absent, cannot be said to have lived out anything so portentous in the sober routine of Max Gate. Possibly Hart Crane, or other American poets since who have brought disaster on themselves, might be accounted for in this way; it might seem to legitimize their destiny. But, though it is question-begging still, in Russian poetry, from Pushkin onwards, the case is different.

In "live by verse", in Pustynak's famous phrase, is to live dangerously. Most of all under the Soviet régime. Mandelstam made a very deliberate choice so to live, with a single-mindedness that prepared him for death, should death be the consequence. At first he could think that the revolution and Russian culture were not antagonistic to each other: thus in 1921 he wrote of Blok's service to both. That the manipulators of the political scene were "enemies of the world" soon became obvious to him. Finally there was no alternative left but an exemplary martyrdom. Struve does not shrink from the word; and it is difficult to contest that Mandelstam's life was disciplined to meet this end.

Struve proposes that the art of Mandelstam should be taken as wholly Christian in spirit. (Like Pasternak he was actually baptized, and felt ill at ease with Judaism.) The key text is a long fragment surviving from his essay of 1915, "Pushkin and Scriabin", which begins with a meditation on their deaths as "national" and "Russian". "National" stands here for Orthodoxy, Orthodox term *sobornyy*, "involving the whole community [of believers]". Mandelstam affirmed that a writer's death should be seen as the final link in the chain of his achievements. Later in the essay he declared that art had been set free by the Redemption to play in joyful confidence. Struve notes here his departure from the Augustinian view expressed by the Catholic writer Léon-Eloy, for whom a Christian art is unthinkable, because art is a "parasite" that was found crawling on "the skin of the first serpent". It is tainted with a rebellious pride. But Mandelstam – unlike Marina Tsvetova for instance – could see no contradiction between this activity and the truly Christian life. He claimed in "Pushkin and Scriabin" that "spiritual gaiety" was a characteristic of this art which could become "a free imitation of Christ".

Such an imitation, with all the tragic consequences not foreseen by him in

1915, Struve maintains to have been the burden of Mandelstam's destiny. There can be no denying that his poetry, both in the *Tristia* volume of 1922 and in the final Voronezh phase, is Christian in pathos. Mandelstam does not assume prominently, as Yury Zhigov is allowed to by Pasternak, the role of a Hamlet overshadowed by Christ. But the Voronezh exile led him to accept the inevitability of death, since capitulation to falsehood was the alternative, and his culminating poem in the Voronezh series touches on resurrection.

Mandelstam's generation of poets, as Struve observes, coming after the timeless void of Symbolism were much concerned with history. He names Eliot, Reverdy and Ungaretti (who is often quoted for additional light on the perceptions of his Russian contemporary). Blok's "historical flair", setting him apart from the other Symbolists except perhaps Bely, much impressed Mandelstam. His own is no less remarkable. Like Eliot he had attended Bergson's lectures in Paris, and Bergson's thought "penetrated" him, as Struve puts it, to an extraordinary degree (whereas Eliot could speak disdainfully of its "meretricious captivation"). He found the idea of progress inapplicable – indeed "utterly lethal" – to poetry. Eliot's sense of European literature having "a simultaneous existence" was also his; but the notion of "an ideal order" formed by "the existing monuments" is too contemplative for Mandelstam. Like Bergson he thinks that "reality is movement": the key words of his poetics, expounded finally in the "Conversation about Dante" (1933), are, all as Struve points out, Bergsonian – the Russian equivalents of *énergie, élan, mouvement, impulsion, durée*. Tradition for him is endlessly self-renewing: the poets of the past need to live alive, the past has to be completed in the present. So he can enunciate the paradox: "Classical poetry is the poetry of revolution."

The "historical sense", according to Eliot, "makes a writer most acutely conscious of his place in time, his own contemporaneity". There was a moment when Mandelstam could not accept contemporaneity with the world he had to live in. When, however, at the beginning of the 1930s he came back to poetry after five years of incapacitation and moral uncertainty, we may agree with Struve that he was uniquely able to "measure history and measure himself against it". Even if his "place in time" meant exclusion from the Soviet present, the awareness of an unbreakable continuity in European culture gave richness and power to his poetry. He restored virtually that "unity of being" for which so many of his contemporaries had been searching. His poetic thinking over the years was integrated, and propelled, as he says Dante's was in the *Divine Comedy*, towards the future.

Recently in these columns (TLS, May 7) John Bayley examined the poetry of allusion which increasingly tends to occupy modern critics. "Great poets and artists", he argued, "establish a primal reality", transcending the force of any learned allusion in the work. He asked: "Why is it that so many critics today have

given up trying to create that primal reality and have made a virtue of being among echoes?"

Mandelstam is indisputably a poet steeped in allusiveness. But, as he insisted in the "Conversation about Dante" ("a quotation [of Dante] is a cliché [sic]"), and it cannot be stilled. In his poetry the cliché has witness to a real sun in a real landscape. Restoring the past, the poet's experience of man in all its freshness making it genuinely "primal", is the work of "seeing fingers", a rounded out, a reincarnation. Struve calls this the "poet of plenitude", a very rare thing in modern literature. Mandelstam's later poetry, composed under the threat of exile, impresses by its hold upon life. The Voronezh cycle ends on a tentative buoyant hope:

The flowers are deathless. The sky is blue. And what will be is only a promise. The future can never constitute more than a promise. But promises are made to be kept: Struve, paraphrasing Mandelstam, says that some are kept under the threat of exile, such interest in the work of this poet's unyieldingness. He had heard renewal to be the law of life, so his memory could persist as hope.

An Observation on a Parable Told in Different Ways by Three Poets viz. William Blake, Richard Dehmel, W. H. Auden

1. Beneath Eternity's sunlit
The lovers kiss, the sweetest joy flies.

Trapped in the blackening window-pane
He flumbles up and down again.

His keppara smelt to sea him beg,
And brish his face, and make a lag.

2. There is a brimming spring called Grief.
From it pure joy spurts on aeth laaf.

I peer into the pool and see
Horror staring back at me.

Plunge in and drink: that portrait hung
Is smashed in sweat drops on the tongue.

3. Make a penthouse, a perfect nest,
Jeezzz, Hi-Fi, all the rest.

The fitted carpet on the floor
Is there to muffle something more.

A shaft of undressed stone that drops
No buldier yet knows where it stops.

Clews labour up the crumbling lime
And clutch the rim at cocktail time.

OK. You cannot keep things nice,
And neither Grief nor Joy ring twice.

Posta must flick in and out of mind
As if we had no other kind.

Of knowing than they make and speak
We work it out ourselves each week.

Their images seduce what's true
And coax it into something new.

Read them with joy. Then choose your time
Fixed the planned drink. Degustardine.

John Bayley

Eloquently unspeaking

Kyril FitzLyon

ANTON CHEKHOV

The Early Stories 1883-88
Chosen and translated by Patrick
Miles and Harvey Pitcher
203pp. John Murray. £9.50.
0 1935 3936 6

Early Chekhov – before 1886 – though not, of course, entirely unknown, is relatively little read. The present collection of short stories written within the period 1883-88, is therefore, particularly welcome, and all the more so since the choice is excellent. In the course of those half-dozen years, Chekhov gradually sloughed off the skin of the humorist who signed his name "Chekhonte" and contributed little sketches with such endings to popular comic papers. Typical examples are the first two stories in this collection: "Rapture", describing the gleeful pride of a young student on seeing his name printed in a newspaper report of an insignificant traffic accident; and "The Death of a Civil Servant", already denoting, though in somewhat primitive form, with Chekhov's favourite theme – the mutual incomprehension of human beings, the failure to connect, in the Proustian sense: for even in those early days the later, mature Chekhov keeps peering through, notably in the terseness of his style, which, in his case, means not just the ability to convey a great deal in very few sentences, but more especially the mastery of silence, his omissions and reticences are sometimes more eloquent than explicit statements. Chekhov's inarticulateness in "The Landlady" (1885) reveals her loneliness and her state of mind far more clearly than any flow of words would have done.

On a deeper level, Chekhov's attitude remains constant throughout: he is the dreamer and the realist, the

Russian literary critic, he was moved not so much by social conscience as by individual morality. It is the absurdity of individual behaviour, not the iniquity of society, which is ridiculed in, for instance, "Fat and Thin" (1883), with the unsuccessful man cringing before his successful friend and thereby embarrassing him, or in "The Chameleon" (1884), where a policeman's attitude to a man bitten by a dog fluctuates as he receives contradictory information regarding the dog-owner's identity, or in "The Malafactor" (1885), in which an illiterate peasant is unable to understand why the law should punish him merely for unscrewing a nut securing rails to sleepers.

There is an element of clowning in all this, but gradually it disappears and absurdity acquires a poignant quality because it is seen to be the result of men's unalterable nature, which may be vicious or virtuous, but is, in any case, outside their conscious control. "The Chorus Girl", written in 1886, on the threshold of Chekhov's second phase and which was particularly admired by Tolstoy, is a beautiful example. No blame is or can be attached to any of the characters; the irony is there, but it is inherent in the situation and in the natural prejudices of all concerned. People (as so often in life as seen by Chekhov) speak to each other as if the speaker alone existed, with not so much as an attempt to grasp each other's meaning or point of view; they are incapable, in fact, of doing so.

Most of the stories in the collection were written in 1886 and later, when Chekhov's tendency to allow the plot to take over is to be dominated by the compulsive behaviour of the characters, become even more obviously apparent. The tramp in "Dreams" unburdens himself to the two policemen accompanying him, for no real reason, apart from some inner need to communicate with his companions. Nothing is resolved by his confession, and he gains only a momentary relief by it. The situation remains unchanged.

which aroused a great deal of indignation in its day for the sordidness of its details, part of the tragedy is contained precisely in the impossibility or, at least, unlikelihood of change, made all the more unbearable by the main character's realization of this impossibility.

The last story of all in the book, here translated as "Let Me Sleep", is the horrifying tale of a young girl – a slavey – driven by want of sleep to murder a baby whose crying keeps her awake. In Russia it met with a hostile reception, particularly from the liberal critics, such as Milskolovskiy, the most prominent of them. It was, as I thought, a typical example of Chekhov's regrettable lack of a guiding principle; his readiness to write about anything, without a "general idea" to inform his work for the edification of his readers. In England, by the time the story reached it many years later, didacticism was out of fashion and the story was much admired by, among others, Katherine Mansfield, who paid it "the ultimate compliment of plagiarizing it."

The quality of the translation by Patrick Miles and Harvey Pitcher is quite exceptional throughout. Obviously, anyone with a knowledge of Russian is bound occasionally to disagree with their choice of an English equivalent – this is inevitable in the case of any translation, however good. The point is that for most of the time the Miles/Pitcher version reads almost as smoothly as if English was its original tongue. This is all the more remarkable since conversations play a very important part in the majority of Chekhov's stories (naturally, for a future playwright) and, as every translator knows, it is speech, particularly working-class or peasant speech, which is more difficult than anything else to render convincingly into another language. Very rarely indeed, the translation sounds as if it were written in English. For instance, this an English tramp would refer to his mother as "mammy". But this is an exception. The general level is

The diagnosis of disorder

Robert Towler

BRYAN WILSON

Religion in Sociological Perspective
187pp. Oxford University Press. £8.50
(paperback, £3.95).
0 19 826663 4

The sociological study of religion has fallen into two distinct phases. At the turn of the last century, it was discussed by every major figure in sociology. Then after the First World War it disappeared from view, except in the study of simple societies by social anthropologists, until it reappeared around 1960 as a subdiscipline, the sociology of religion. Since that time it has had a discernibly different career in the United States, in Europe and in Britain, and leading writers have emerged in each tradition. On the British scene, none has been as prominent as Bryan Wilson. *Religion in Sociological Perspective*, 1966, has been read by more people than has any other British book on the sociology of religion. In addition to the many he has edited, this new book is his eighth in twenty years.

Religion in Sociological Perspective is based on lectures Dr Wilson gave in Tokyo in 1979. Because he was addressing Japanese audiences he has produced a general statement of his view of Western society and Western religion, and one which is exceptionally clear and uncluttered. The book is an important one, therefore, for those who have benefited from his perspective in the past. Its six chapters discuss the sociology of religion as a scientific discipline, the contrasts between religion in the East and in the West, religious sects, the so-called new religious movements, both in Japan and in the West, and the "secularization thesis" of which Wilson is the main proponent.

Chapter Two, "The functions of religion in contemporary society", forms the core of the book, with some of its themes discussed again in the final chapter. Here Wilson spells out his diagnosis of contemporary society, following lines sketched in *The Youth Culture and the Universities*, 1970, and *Contemporary Transformations of Society*, 1976. The analysis has the form of a syllogism: religion is necessary for a humane and ordered society; religion is in decline; trouble is coming.

Wilson elaborates his major premise in terms of Toennies' distinction between *Gemeinschaft* (a "persisting local, face-to-face group, as typically represented by the clan or the village") and *Gesellschaft* (an "extensive, impersonal, politically co-ordinated state society"), and he argues that something vital has been lost in the transition of the West from one to the other. There is an ambiguity as to what has been lost, except that religion is identified as having provided it in the past. On the one hand it is presented as meaning and purpose, support and solace, which are needed the more urgently in the soulless modern world of technique and impersonal relations. "Modern society rejects religion on intellectual grounds", but only religion can provide such reassurances.

On the other hand what is lost could be something more crucial to basic social order, for Wilson argues that although our society is characterized by rational procedures, people co-operate in following them because of a sense of commitment, of obligation, of public responsibility and civic virtue. This is a long-standing interest of Wilson's: he has edited a book entitled *Rationality*, 1970, and he maintains that the functioning of a rational society order is dependent on values which were a by-product, or "latent function", of religion. For many of those involved in the operation of the modern social system, "it is almost impossible to assume" he writes, "that personal virtues have become superfluous, because the system works impersonally. The system is increasingly committed to purely procedural values. The agencies which sustain the old-fashioned virtues are

Yet, were these dispositions not widely diffused within the population, were there no residually interested goodwill and social obligation, the whole exchange relation would be impossible. Thus there is a paradox: behaviour that appears, when narrowly viewed, to be rational for each individual, and which the system itself promotes, is insufficient, given the nature of humanity, to maintain the basic background conditions for its own operation. There are unexplored elements of "input" on which a modern society depends but which it does nothing to service.

That is the major premise. The minor premise, that religion is in decline, is treated as self-evident. The conclusion is reached with a quasi-Weberian resignation: Contemporary society operates as if affective-neutrality were a sufficient value-orientation for things to work; it may not discover that there are other necessities, the virtues nurtured essentially in local communities, in religious contexts, which in the long run will be shown to be as indispensable to the society of the future as they were to the communities of the past.

In *Religion in Sociological Perspective* Wilson argued that religion would necessarily decline in modern society, except for that of the sects, which would provide a haven of *Gemeinschaft* for those unwilling or unable to live in unmitigated *Gesellschaft*. Now sixteen years later, his argument is wider. Except for the few people who opt into sects and the new religious movements, the progressive decline of religious institutions will, he predicts, effect all, since it undermines the foundations on which society rests and as a consequence there will be increasing social disorder.

Wilson is very aware of disorder: "The growth of crime, of vandalism, of neurosis and mental breakdown; the growing disruption of marriage; the increase in various types of addiction, whether to drugs, alcohol, or gambling; and the incidence of personal isolation, loneliness, and suicide" are among the ills to which he draws attention. Specifically in Britain, he says, "there are strikes and absenteeism on a wide scale, and there is a considerable incidence of vandalism and hooliganism". According to Wilson's analysis, these phenomena are the result of the concomitant decline of religious institutions which formerly nurtured vital values of selflessness. There is an echo, perhaps, of Voltaire: "I want my lawyer, tailor, valet, even my wife, to believe in God; I think that if they do I shall be robbed less and cheated less."

Many people will find this analysis appealing, but how, one wonders, might it be tested? What findings or findings would falsify it? Like all functionalist explanations, it has the appearance of containing a prediction, but on closer inspection it is an oxymoron: *ex post facto*, the only evidence in the evidence for the major premise. Wilson's argument here is strongly reminiscent of his earlier demonstration of religious decline: the figures for church attendance show the decline for Europe, but in America, where the figures are buoyant, he maintained that it is the secularization of religion itself which indicates decline. It could be argued that hypothesis-testing would not be appropriate to examining sociological explanations of this order, and that a more "historical" approach is to be preferred. Against such a defence one would have to point out that the decline of *Gemeinschaft* began a very long time ago. How far, or for how long, must it proceed before social disruption occurs? And by asserting that signs of breakdown "manifest themselves in somewhat different ways in different societies" Wilson precludes the question which criteria of breakdown should be regarded as significant.

The decline of religion, too, is a projected affair. The proportion of non-believers in England and Wales,

religious disaffiliation, topped 10 per cent in the 1850s, 30 per cent in the 1900s, and rose to more than 30 per cent only in the 1960s. Which is the crucial point in the decline? Or, to take an admittedly hard case, how would one account for Poland, where an urban, industrial society appears to promote religious fervour, but where, nevertheless, there are abundant signs of breakdown?

Though stated in a more developed form, Wilson's analysis in *Religion in Sociological Perspective* is of a piece with his earlier writings. For all its interest, it contains two fundamental weaknesses. The first is that the basic term, religion, is used in three distinct ways. In itself, this is unexceptionable, indeed it is probably necessary, but it constitutes a weakness because Wilson slides from one meaning to another without warning, which results in grave confusion. At one point religion denotes churches or sects, in other words religious organizations or fully differentiated religious institutions. At another point it refers to diffuse beliefs in supernatural agencies, either of a personal or of an impersonal character, and to behaviour influenced by such beliefs, as when he writes that, in medieval Europe, "paganism was usually more, rather than less, religiously than Christianity, and heresy was usually more trenchant and enthusiastic than most Christian belief". This gives rise to confusion because the evidence Wilson cites for religious decline always relates to the churches, and diffuse religiousness, which was "more religious than Christianity" in past ages, is dismissed in our own day on the grounds that even if it were prevalent – whether it is, is not examined – it would be socially insignificant because it is unorganized.

At a third point Wilson is referring to religion when he writes of "agencies which sustain" certain valued

dispositions, such as "disinterested goodwill and social obligation". This is confusing because, while he says clearly that he will adopt "not a functionalist, but a substantive, definition of religion", it transpires that a substantive definition is consistent with his analysis only if he ascribes a vital function to supernatural beliefs, and solely to supernatural beliefs. This is tantamount to adopting a functionalist definition, for everything in the argument suggests that he would reject the idea that a puritanical form of socialism, for example, might effectively sustain disinterested goodwill and social obligation, even in an industrial society.

The second fundamental weakness in Wilson's analysis is found also in the writings of Peter L. Berger, the doyen of American sociology of religion, particularly when he writes about wider matters than religion (as in Berger *et al.*, *The Homeless Mind*). In the same sense that some theorists are customarily described as vulgar Marxists, each, in respect of this weakness, might be called a vulgar Weberian. Both writers display a marked tendency to identify a global process which is at work (Berger calls it "societalization"), and then press empirical evidence into service to demonstrate its existence and effects. The vulgarly consists in the way they handle the evidence; they are Weberian in identifying an ineluctable driving force of social development. For Wilson, the decline of religion is but one component, albeit a crucial one, in the process of societalization: "Western history, and perhaps history everywhere," according to Wilson, the dynamic of this process derives from the internal logic of social development, so that it is possible for him to assert that "the pressures within

the system are towards the reduction of individuality and towards the organization of men [and women]... for the sake of efficiency and rational co-ordination". This kind of assertion, which is to be found in Berger also, is hopelessly teleological. What is extraordinary, however, is that Wilson should not ask whose interests are served by greater "efficiency and rational co-ordination". The argument would shed its metaphysical quality if the role of capital in the process were to be explored, and "strikes and absenteeism" might then be interpretable as socially meaningful actions with deep historical roots, as Weber would doubtless have seen them, rather than responses to "pressures within the system".

Wilson has done more than any other British scholar to stimulate the sociological study of religion, and his work on sectarian religion, from *Sects and Society*, 1961, to *Magic and the Millennium*, 1973, and *The Noble Savage*, 1975, provides a peerless example of how to conduct empirical work firmly grounded in sociological theory. Precisely because he is so significant a scholar, however, his confused and confusing analysis of modern capitalist society needs to be shown to be as ill-founded as it is. His conclusion could be correct, but if so it is based on an inspired guess, for it does not follow from the arguments advanced. Bryan Wilson rightly denies a romantic attachment to the *Gemeinschaft* of the Middle Ages, but one wonders if he is not secretly nostalgic for the 1950s, when there was no less social disorder than in any other period of human history, but when schoolboys still wore caps and undergraduates still wore neckties: when order meant deference to one's allotted place in the social hierarchy, not the absence of disorder.

Freedom in the faith

J. L. Houlden

SCHUBERT M. OGDEN

The Point of Christianity: the 1980
Sarnum Lecture
193pp. SCM. £5.95.
0 334 01276 7

Apart from its purely historical aspect, the study of Christian doctrine is an uncertain branch of scholarship. What are the criteria for its proper conduct? Is its task simply the interpretation of the tradition? If so, from what standpoint is interpretation permitted or required? Or is its job to develop the tradition beyond its present state? If so, in the light of what range of considerations? How far beyond the bounds of faith may it look for sustenance? Is it meant to proclaim, to explain, to criticize or to speculate?

Professor Schubert M. Ogden's *Point of Christianity* is devoted to a position on these fundamental issues, but his general stance is sufficiently clear. He is firmly within the tradition but attentive to modern attitudes and assumptions which render old statements no longer attractive. He is not a radical but a developer, and, in general sympathy, an existentialist developer. He is not, therefore, one who thinks Christianity is a false tradition, now, or, conclusions (or the lack of them) about Jesus. On the contrary, his existentialist proclivities lead him to point out that even the first Christians proclaimed not exactly who Jesus was but who he was to them.

The first achievement of this book is to bring together two distinct interests which make Christianity now so problematic. The first is that of historical enquiry, in principle theologically disinterested. The second is that of faith, concerned to explicate the conviction that Jesus is decisive for self-understanding in relation to God and all else. The two interests, the one modern, the other as old as the hills,

together. Professor Ogden forces the admission that the quest for objective historical information is, beyond a few elementary matters, fruitless. What the evidence gives us is witness to Jesus, conditioned by faith, yet it is nevertheless possible and desirable to ascertain the earliest, purest apostolic witness, so that the basic claim of Christianity may be seen in its elemental form: that Jesus is "the decisive re-presentation of God".

Ogden's main concern, however, is to explain or, as he puts it, "make the point of" Christianity, and not simply "talk about" that point in the light of its difficulties and limitations. If the point of Christianity is to speak of "the meaning of Jesus for us, given our more fundamental question about the meaning of ultimate reality for us", then it is related to our widest and deepest needs. These are described under the general heading of "liberation", and much of the second half of the book is devoted to a Christian understanding of freedom. Jesus himself, Ogden admits, was not interested in bringing about social restructuring (such a thing was not on his agenda available to him), but his presentation of God's love in his own life and person entails it for us.

Writing in the light of both Edward Norman's *Reith Lectures* and the work of the Latin American liberation theologians (both of which Ogden harks back to the work of Reinhold Niebuhr, who in his day equally affirmed the implications of belief about Jesus for social and political life. In lectures delivered in England, it would have been appropriate to appeal to the even bolder tradition of classical Christian socialism, based in the works of such as Charles Gore and R. H. Tawney, on precisely the christological conviction to which he appeals.

Will that tradition stand this new presentation? Ogden hopes to show that it passes the two tests of appropriateness and credibility, and he has less difficulty with the former than with the latter. It is hard to make a

present condition of a christology which sees Jesus in the role of liberator, "in the sense of one who sets us free for the freedom of the children of God".

But credibility raises precisely the questions with which we began. In what sense of reference is this belief about Jesus in fact believable? It requires both knowledge that Jesus is truly at the fount of a tradition which proclaims such a message and an understanding of God which can "authorize" it. On both issues, despite the closeness of the argument, ambiguity seems to remain. We have only the apostolic witness to Jesus and the facts about him remain strictly inaccessible; yet the earliest stratum of that witness, as identified by the author, is accorded special weight, and it is hard not to think that it is, at least partly, historical weight. On the theistic backing for Jesus, we are told on the one hand that as we have no immediate knowledge of God, so also analogical reasoning can give no access to him, yet on the other hand, symbolic language (about God's love and so forth) may be relied upon and acted upon in the world. The impenetrable barrier thus seems nevertheless to be penetrated.

The book's substantial value is twofold: its appreciative but corrective assessment of the numerous recent attempts at revision of traditional christology, and its balanced judgment on the relation of current political theology to christology. It is a work from within the tradition where doctrine is to merit the name, must perhaps hold. The risk is that it will beg too many questions for someone might wish to hear a word from God in a secular age.

William Temple: An Archbishop for All Seasons by Charles W. Lowry (131pp. Washington, DC: University Press of America, distributed in the UK by Translucence Book Service, £11.55, paperback £4.55, 0 8191 2335 2). It is a new biography and personal narrative with an anthology of anecdotes, and a foreword by the

On the preternatural plane

Robin Robbins

R. D. Stock

The Holy and the Daemonic from Sir Thomas Browne to William Blake
395pp. Guildford: Princeton University Press. £19.50.
0 691 06485 4

Come on, ye critics, find one fault who dare!
For, read it backward, like a witch's prayer,
'Twill do as well.

The Earl of Dorset's lines are not, of course, fairly applicable to R. D. Stock's new book: since he most clearly enunciates his first principles towards the end, deploring "the inability of the typical modern mind to grasp that complexity of imperiousness and grandeur, love and assurance, traditionally ascribed to the Divine Father", his book may be more easily comprehended if read backwards. As printed, his summary view of the writers named in his title occurs a little earlier: "Browne shifts the view of the preternatural plane; Blake pursues it with the ferocity and determination of a congenital naturalist." Those pedantic enough to wonder how a naturalist could be congenital, or pursue that sort of plene, may find a clue in a preceding declination of Professor Stock's stance *vis-à-vis* one of his enemies, reason: "Calvinism and its exhortations, were bracing preservatives, throughout the Age of Reason, of a sense of the holy and daemonic." The retrogressive reader will now be prepared for an indication of the proper use of Gothic horror tales: "it, as it has been argued, a deep spiritual understanding cannot be attained without an immediate and strong sense of evil, then these books have their place in our religious education."

Thus grounded in Stock's outstandingly individual conformities, the reader may all want to establish his criteria of literary criticism. These must be inferred from Stock's verdicts and practice, and, since paraphrase might appear implausible or distorted, they are most judiciously and transparently presented through quotation of his singular turns of thought and expression. Blake, he teaches, is "a superb poet of spiritual fear... however ambivalent the may have been about the Tiger... But whether Blake's efforts, on the whole, are to be reckoned propitious to another matter." Of Cowper's "The Castaway":

Double vision

Cedric Watts

DAVID B. PIRIE

William Wordsworth: The Poetry of Grandeur and of Tenderness
301pp. Methuen. £14.95.
0 416 31300 0

Present-day literary critics tend to reverse Janus, the two-faced god who presides over text, to be deemed to be radically paradoxical or contradictory. Whether the critic be a traditionalist, structuralist, post-structuralist, deconstructionist, or purported Marxist, he is increasingly likely to be a worshipper of Janus. He may also be a disciple of Bottom, who founded deconstructionism and the self-referential work when he instructed Shylock to thrust his head through the lion's neck and explain that it was not really a lion but Shylock the joiner ("I am no such thing; I am a man"), so as not to frighten the ladies. Today's critics emulate Shylock in their readiness to disjoin the works, preferably, after text is proved to be Jensonian. Whether this approach is fruitful or reductive seems to depend on the critic's humour rather than on his theoretical premises; but certainly a reductive current fallacy is the binarist one: the belief that the tensions in a work must be two in number (and equally matched), when those tensions may in fact be multiple and unequal. It is not surprising, then, to find David Pirie claiming that his book's

Stock pronounces: "I consider this, along with 'Light Shining out of Darkness', to be his most flawless poem", while of Smart's *Injubate Agno* he reveals that "Taken as a whole it is disunited and monotonous; taken as it was probably composed, in smithereens, it can be quite charming, even haunting." He assures us that in Smart, Wesley, Cowper and Black "The 'deistic evasion' so alluring to Pope and Thomson is little caressed here." Thus it may be deduced that, for the congenial naturalist, pursuing planes and carressing evasions are not simultaneously compatible activities.

Eighteenth-century novels come in for sonic substantial comparisons. On Lewis's best-known work Stock delivers a judgment that can have been after-effects only by experience: "The after-effects of unbridled lust, the loathing of self and the other, the stupefaction and remorse are very adequately rendered in Chapter 11 and give *The Monk* a spiritual resonance altogether beyond *The Italian*, or for that matter, *Measure for Measure*", with the judicious concession that "the torture scenes, though more forthright than Rudcliffe's, are curiously feckless". Beckford's lasting achievement is even more memorably particularized: "the flaring hearts—these remain with us". And Stock reveals his grasp of novelistic procedures in such revelations as that "Rudcliffe furnishes her own gloze on this scene". Richardson earns treatment proportionate to his bulk: in two pages of simplified summary of the story of *Clarissa*, Stock caters for two sorts of reader at once with such information as "Her mother is innoxious but asthenic, of no use to her", and such perceptions as that "her surname, Harlowe, is a near homonym for a very unseemly word". Alas, Margaret Asquith beat him to that one, and we may suspect he is put a little off balance by words beginning with "homo."

Johnson and Hume are for Stock almost god and devil, though here the holy does not match the daemonic in mesmerizing his faculties. While prompt with crisp verdicts on Johnson's works, praising "the taught and elliptical syntax" of *The Vanity of Human Wishes*, and revealing that, like *Candide*, *Rasselas* is an oriental tale "exhibiting the reticence of human happiness", it is with Hume that Stock really gets into his stride, offering both particular information on the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion* ("of this piece he was very fond, chaffing incessantly under his friends' prudential monitions" (such a tease, that Hume) — and general analysis: "Despite Hume's pious obsecrations to Theism, his view of human nature seems quite secular." He gratefully reproduces two 1930s philosophers' assertion of a *public principle* in his essay *On Miracles*, but, to show he is neither humanly ungrateful nor divinely unerring, frequently employs the device in his own arguments. One question in particular is begged passion in such assertions as that in Lewis "the main thing is intact, the authentic, spiritual horror", that Richardson succeeds with "Lovelace's authentic spiritual horror" and "the whoremadams, Mrs. Sinclair, whose death-agony, however risibly overcharged, does evoke spiritual horror". By this same means of proof Stock frees us from Hume's evil spell by appealing to "deepest religious instincts". Such are the criteria by which he assesses Young, Blair, Akenside, Watts, Swift, Pope and Blackmore.

Nevertheless, for extremely long stretches, Stock maintains the appearance of a godlike impartiality between superstition and reason. If he momentarily lapses in alluding to the

occultist Montague Summers's "effervescent credulity", he redresses the balance twelve pages later by commending Summers's verdict on the equally credulous Glanville: "undoubtedly the most able as he is the laziest-minded English writer upon Witchcraft in the seventeenth century". Here, however, Stock prefers to hold to his own strict standards: he will not allow John Webster's insistence in *The Displaying of Witchcraft* (1677) that "witnesses must be perfectly sound in their sensory organs and in judgement" (Webster is condignly punished by exclusion from the index). Likewise the scepticism of Reginald Scot in *The Discoverie of Witchcraft* (1584) is dismissed as "very reductive".

On Sir Thomas Browne Stock's characteristic powers are exercised to the full. By rewording Browne's allusion to God the "precious determiner" as "precious determiner" Stock enables himself to make the point that God's omniscience is a "conceptualized hideously as a precious determination". In the same way, he is able to align Browne with Thomson: "Gloom" is a central term.

The prophetic path

Rosemary Ashton

A. L. LE QUESNE

Carlyle
99pp. Oxford University Press.
£5.50 (paperback, £1.25).
0 19 287563 9

In the Preface to his excellent book, A. L. Le Quesne thanks the editors of the Past Masters series "for allowing themselves to be persuaded that Carlyle is indeed the Past Master that I believe him to be". Yet in his Epilogue, he almost apologizes for Carlyle, summing up his achievements in rather negative terms:

Carlyle's achievement is local in both time and place. He is neither a philosopher, nor a major figure of European, as distinct from British, intellectual history.

Fortunately, Le Quesne menages, in the ninety-three packed pages between these two statements, to show why Carlyle deserves his place in the series, without either overvaluation of his virtues or desperate defence of his vices.

He rightly sees Carlyle's major importance in the prophetic role he adopted, warning his contemporaries of the moral and social dangers of revolution on the one hand and reactionary complacency on the other. There is, I think, a slight distortion in Le Quesne's insistence on the "one brief decade" (dating from "Charlism" in 1839 and encompassing *On Heroes and Hero-Worship*, 1840, *Past and Present*, 1843, and, less convincingly, the *Letters and Speeches of Oliver Cromwell*, 1845) in which Carlyle fulfilled the role of social prophet. It seems to devalue the importance of the early *Edinburgh Review* articles, "Characteristics", 1829, and the enormous influence of *Sartor Resartus* and *The French Revolution*, which first attracted the young Victorian generation to Carlyle. These were the works which drew the admiration of George Eliot, the discipleship of Sterling and Emerson, and the (short-lived) enslavement of J. S. Mill, as well as exercising a more demonstrable influence on the manner and matter of Dickens's and Mrs. Gaskell's novels. It must be said that Le Quesne gives full and fair accounts of *Sartor* and *The French Revolution*, but he places them on the upward stroke of the curve which no draws of Carlyle's career, rather than at or near its height.

Apart from this difference of emphasis, I find the structure of his narrative compelling. He wisely makes full use of the natural progress and decline of Carlyle's prophetic path, linking it closely to the outer events of Carlyle's life and to his developing and changing interests. Thus the move from Annandale to Edinburgh to the partial condition of Carlyle's loss of his simple religious faith and temporary adoption of Enlightenment scepticism. The move to London in 1834 marks his progression from essayist and romantic satirist (in *Sartor*) to historian, and in Carlyle's peculiar view of history lies the seed which will naturally come to fruition in the social prophecies of "Charlism" and *Past and Present*. History, as Le Quesne points out, was for Carlyle "the true revelation of the divine, and the inspired historian was the prophet". Le Quesne gives an excellent sketch of Carlyle's view of history in the context of the leading ideas of nineteenth-century thought.

To Wholly partially, and to Marx wholly, history was an autonomous and self-justifying "process", to Carlyle it was something more like a theatre for "the workings of" a providence which, itself, remains firmly outside history, and whose main concern is less to steer history as a whole, to some satisfactory conclusion, than to "punish" and counter the misdeeds and follies of human beings and human societies. Here, too, though, Carlyle is inconsistent, and fluctuates between a providential view of history and a more naturalistic one, gleaned from

Browne had spoken enigmatically of "secret gloire or bottom of our day's destiny." For the CED (or more revealingly "gloire or bottom of our day's destiny") would be "ball or skein (of thread)" would wantonly to destroy a fertile legends process in a reductive search for supposititious (Stock would say supposititious) hermeneutics.

A prime target of Stock's legends and forlaid attacks is "the whig confidence in progressive enlightenment and naturalism". If any faith in the spread of reason, say, that new books are more likely to enlighten, and to enlighten to understanding, still glimmers, it is surely dimmed by the work of Professor Stock. He certainly evokes one reader, at least, an authentic, unspiritual, horror. His is an extraordinary book for Princeton to have published. Needless to say, it is not for the common reader, scholar and critics, teachers and students everywhere, in whose field, should waste no time in reading it.

Goethe and the Saint-Simonians, according to which society oscillate between ages of faith and ages of unbelief. But on the whole Carlyle was much less concerned with laws of history than could be broken than with rules of history he must not be.

The last sentence epigrammatically catches Carlyle's essential self-differentiating characteristics. Le Quesne gives many such deft accounts of the intellectual background. Even, understandably, some aspects of European culture, most notably "German Romanticism", remain rather vaguely drawn, the particular elements influential on Carlyle are not elicited.

Except in the case of *The French Revolution*, from which Le Quesne quotes aptly, there is rather little direct quotation from Carlyle himself. It is clearly difficult, given the brevity of the work and the need for an inclusive survey of its subject, to give much room to quotation. Furthermore, Carlyle was notoriously long-winded, his rhetorical effects being built up in over-long paragraphs. Nevertheless, one feels the lack, particularly in the central chapter on Carlyle's prophesying, of the prophetic voice itself. *Past and Present* is full of sounding passages of concern for the Victorian poor and disdain for the careless complacency ruling class. The voice which roused Engels and led to his famous essays on the condition of the working class in England ought to sound directly to us here.

But these are criticisms which should not discourage readers. There are numerous illuminating sketches and stimulating hints for further reading. I can single out only a few here: the description of Carlyle's "quality of stereoscopic vision, his habit of translating this world in terms of values derived from a different and invisible one"; the analysis of Carlyle's strange non-party political position — somewhere between the Tories and the Radicals (he could not decide whether to send "Charlism" to the *Quarterly Review*); the analysis of Carlyle's "Americanistic heroes"; the lecture on "The King as Hero"; Carlyle's two main examples are Cromwell and Napoleon, not hereditary monarchs. In short, A. L. Le Quesne shows well the reasons why George Eliot could write in 1855 (before Carlyle became so) and lost the admiration of many of his contemporaries, that "there is hardly a superior or active mind of his generation that has not been modified by Carlyle's writings; there has hardly been an English book written for the last ten or twelve years that would not have been different if Carlyle had not lived".

Rex Warner's novel *The Archangel*, with Anthony Burgess's Introduction, reviewed in the TLS, August 6, is available also in paperback from Oxford University Press (£2.95). 281356 6

Depths of depression

Nick Roddick

THOMAS ALLEN NELSON

Kubrick: Inside a Film Artist's Mse
268pp. Indiana University Press.
£22.50 (paperback, £5.97).
0 253 14648 8

PHILIP MOSLEY
Ingmar Bergman: The Cinema as Mistress
192pp. Marion Boyars. £8.95.
0 7145 2644 4

At first sight, these two books have little in common. One would hardly expect the middle-class son of a Spanish pastor to share a worldview with a Jewish autodidact from the Bronx. But they are both, to an extent unusual among film directors, moralists. They have concentrated on sketching a map of the twentieth-century consciousness outside — or, as they might see it, above — political considerations, with concern for character and plot generally taking second place to a more schematic examination of the problems of a world without God. True, they set about it in very different ways. All of Bergman's films, even *The Seventh Seal* and *Shame*, are essentially chamber dramas, gradually refining their images of conflict, guilt and isolation. Since *The Silence* (1963), a Bergman film, as Philip Mosley puts it, is not a film that "talks about God's silence, it is the representation of that silence".

Kubrick's films, on the other hand, are anything but chamber dramas: vast, sprawling but intricately structured canvases which portray what Thomas Allen Nelson calls a state of contingency, "a world of total probability and zero significance". In each case the world portrayed is a frightening and depressing one, in which human efforts are thwarted by the inadequacy of the individual (Bergman) or the randomness of the world (Kubrick).

Thomas Allen Nelson's is a somewhat academic book, equipped with a plethora of footnotes and an extensive bibliography. Kubrick, he claims, is an artist working in a world from which the "epistemological shift" of the early twentieth century — notably Einstein and quantum physics — has removed the certainty of fact. His aim is to combine Pudovkin's building-block principle of cinematic construction with the ambiguity of Orson Welles, thus allowing the audience directly to experience the idea of contingency. In addition, he shows "a greater interest in states of mind and emotion than in character". Nelson is brilliant in his treatment of *A Clockwork Orange*, excessively complex in his discussion of *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and generally a very demanding critic. His book deals quickly with the early films, hardly at all with *Spartacus* (on which Kubrick had no real control over script or concept), and devotes long chapters to all the films from *Lolita* to *The Shining*.

There can be no denying that the

Soap and flannel

Craig Brown

DOROTHY HOBSON

Crossroads: The Drama of a Soap Opera
176pp. Methuen. £8.95.
0 413 50140 X

Crossroads was first transmitted by ATV in November 1964. Originally it was to be called *Midland Road* but the writers changed the title to *Crossroads* which, Dorothy Hobson informs us, "was to be both the name of the motel and signify the Midlands as the crossroads of the lives of the two sisters in the series". It has been watched regularly by fifteen million viewers, but the critics have never enjoyed it. This is because it is shoddily written, badly acted and produced on a stingy budget.

Dorothy Hobson does not see it like that. Her brave thesis argues that *Crossroads* has been undervalued and misrepresented by the critics, that it deals accurately with major human problems, that its viewers are alert and critical ("the myth of the passive viewer is about to be shattered") and that — her trump card — fifteen million people can't be wrong.

She ignores much contrary evidence. For instance, a confidential IBA survey which discovered that though *Crossroads* did indeed have fifteen million viewers it scored very low on audience appreciation. Though she is continually applauding "the supremacy of the audience's own perception of the reality of the programme" she fails to match this with the producers' own comment that "the mass of people regard them not as actors but regard them as characters". Early in the book, she states that comparison with Coronation Street is "unhelpful" and hardly mentions it again. In fact, comparison with *Coronation Street* is extremely illuminating, for that soap opera is not only watched by more people but is consistently well acted and well written. Much of what Dorothy Hobson says is inevitable in the production of *Crossroads* is triumphantly overcome in *Coronation Street*. That people discuss the previous evening's soap opera episode can be news only to one as sheltered from society as a sociologist, to assume that this "shatters the myth of the passive viewer" is to get a little over-enthusiastic.

But the book is not all cliché and misapprehension. It does correct the traditional belief that the creator of popular art is motivated by money and cynicism. The *Crossroads* producers and writers have an unvarying belief in the quality of their product and treat it with extraordinary earnestness. Here is one writer's outline for a new character, quoted with apparent approval by Dorothy Hobson:

With LAMONT intentions are Paramount, i.e. if the intention is good then it is okay to do a bad deed. To simplify: murder is bad. But the intention to murder a megalomaniacal dangerous shit, say Hittler, would be good. This really can't be called cynical. It is, incidentally, and LAMONT wouldn't know this necessarily, the teaching of Hindu lord, Krishna. How much more reassuring confirmation of cynicism would have been.

book has a guiding idea, nor that Nelson pursues that idea through meticulous examination of the concept, structure and even sign images of Kubrick's films. But too often — especially in the case of *The Shining* — he falls prey to the danger of attempting to transfer the associative aesthetic of film to the linear logic of prose. Occasionally, he even takes himself humorously to task for over-interpretation, generally in footnotes. But it is a rearguard action: he is committed to the basic assault, as is shown by his comment on Wendy, in *The Shining*, discovering that her husband has spent the past weeks typing on sheet after sheet of paper "All work and no play make Jack a dull boy": "Wendy's terrified face resembles a pale moon from 2001 rising from behind the horizontal lines of Jack's madness... and moving into a space enclosed by two lines". Kubrick: *Inside a Film Artist's Mse* is a serious book, veering between insight and interpretative over-density. Representing a strong intelligent response to

extant, still do share) a pool of "anonymous" melodies, lyrics and improvisatory techniques. A further concern is with modes of cultural transmission in a society poised, as Mississippi was in the period 1890–1930, between oral communication and communication through new forms of technology. Surprisingly, even when, in the mid-1920s, the main blues singers in and around Drew had become prolific recording artists, the local community of practitioners continued to influence and to be influenced by one another in ways which are usually associated with an almost wholly oral culture: live performance, imitation and adaptation, networks of kin and friendship, and word of mouth. Evans has interviewed many blues singers who are still alive and singing and provides us with an extraordinarily detailed and dynamic "life-history" of a single and much admired song, Tommy Johnson's "Big Road Blues". He has tracked down and compared many permutations of this song in terms of title, melody and lyric, sung by everyone from the relatively well-known to the very obscure, on recordings, in shacks in down-town Drew and in the open air. He is able to show that individual folk blues are indeed usually built up from a cultural stock consisting of a brief stanzaic "core", which coalesces with variable

Bill Luckin

DAVID EVANS

Big Road Blues: Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues
364pp. University of California Press. £19.50.
0 520 43484 8

Some years ago David Evans wrote a short and impressive biography of the influential blues singer Tommy Johnson (c. 1900–1956) which hinted at a more substantial work in progress. In *Big Road Blues*, which is undoubtedly a major contribution to the ethnomusicology and social history of the rural South, Evans has returned to Tommy Johnson's ground and, more specifically, to the small, poor and racially scarred township of Drew, Mississippi. His purpose has been to analyse an already quite well-documented blues tradition and to make connections between the local and the national identity of Black American vocal music. This research raises fundamental questions about the making of folk blues, the impact upon the rural tradition of the gramophone revolution of the 1920s, and the extent to which, consciously or unconsciously, groups of blues performers shared (and, to a limited

Kubrick's films, it is very much work, not play.

Philip Mosley's book on Bergman belongs to a different school of criticism. By his own admission it is aimed at "the experienced but eclectic cinema-goer who, having seen most of Bergman's major films, would appreciate an informed view of their context and significance". His filmography is merely an "outline" and there are no footnotes. Ideally, his book should be read as an accompaniment to some mammoth retrospective of the director's films, since he is excellent at picking up visual and thematic echoes across the years. Unlike Nelson, he is at pains to point out that his subject's films are, in fact, quite simple. And towards the end, definite reservations about Bergman begin to creep in. He finds *Crías* and *Whispers* "technically flawless but unpalatably harrowing", the films of the late 1970s a bleak reopening of old wounds, and reserves his greatest esteem — as well as his best criticism — for what he calls the "canonical films"

between *Wild Strawberries* (1957) and *A Passion* (1969). Indeed, the book gives the impression of having been completed some time ago and hastily updated with a short chapter on the recent films: *From the Life of the Marionette* and *Fanny and Alexander*. Bergman's two most recent films, make it into the filmography but not into the text. Mosley stresses Bergman's Scandinavian heritage, and the influence of Strindberg, but his placing of Bergman in context is sporadic and not really followed through. He is a useful guide to the director's best films, with the sections on *The Silence*, *Persona*, *The Shame* and *A Passion* especially valuable in the way in which they go straight to the core of the conflict. It is a solid introduction to the work of this master not, as the dust-jacket claims, a "provocative" one. Its only real provocation comes in its title, taken from a three-page quotation by Bergman (theatre-writer, cinema-mistress), but never really followed up in the text.

Core and permutations

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fragments of melody, and a repertoire of free-floating and moving verbal imagery. There are many examples of such language in *Big Road Blues* but a brief extract from Roosevelt Holts' "Sundown Blues", which is itself based on a song of Tommy Johnson's of the same name, indicates its style and power.

Well, don't the sun look lonesome
shining down through the trees?
Well, the sun look lonesome shining
down through the trees.
Don't your baby look lonesome
picking up her trunk to leave?

Evans insists that, whereas the classic blues of Bessie Smith and the other great, mostly female, performers of the 1920s, depended for their impact upon the unfolding of a powerful narrative, the rural folk genre remained more fragmentary, allusive and oblique: non-folk blues were grandly gestural and usually performed by "stars", but the folk variant was still rooted in understatement and intense audience participation. Evans's commitment to folklore and to a loose form of structuralism sometimes leads him to underestimate the extent to which recent research in anthropology and the social history of literacy has begun to clarify differences in popular consciousness between oral and more "modern" societies.)

One might be tempted to conclude that, considered as individuals, performers of the blues in the Drew area were, and still are, lacking in artistic originality. But this would be to mistake a central, if problematic, aspect of *Big Road Blues*. We now know from the recorded evidence, as well as from the writings of Paul Oliver, David Evans himself, and others, that Tommy Johnson and the equally influential Charley Patton (1887–1934) were major figures and that their musical gathering in *Big Road Blues* was a gathering of a number of other performers of talent.

And yet there is undoubtedly a residual tension between Evans's evaluation of the Mississippi folk blues as music, and his deeper theoretical preoccupations. He argues forcibly that we should interpret a unique blues primarily in terms of performance, "generated by" the singer but shaped at a much deeper and culturally more significant level, by a relatively small stock of standard blues (together with a much larger repertoire of musical and lyrical fragments). The socio-historical and ethnomusicological evidence presented in *Big Road Blues* strongly supports this explanation. Nevertheless, parts of the general argument will be new to those who listen to the blues mainly for pleasure and who have become accustomed to an altogether more anecdotal and less intellectual approach. There are signs that Evans himself has not fully recognised his role as distinguished musical critic with that of richer investigator of an objective "non-artistic" folk tradition.

Andrew Motion